

GURU GOBIND SINGH

AND

THE MUGHALS

By
KARTAR SINGH

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PART I

Historical Background *(First Nine Gurus and the Mughals)*

CHAPTER I

Babar to Akbar

Babar, founder of the Mughal empire in India, met Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith, and sought his blessings so that he might succeed in establishing an empire in this country. On the other hand, Aurangzeb, last of the Great Mughals, so estranged Guru Gobind Singh, last of the Sikh Gurus, that not only the latter would not see him, though thrice invited to do so, but he also decided to stake his all in efforts to destroy the Mughal empire. It would, thus, seem that Guru Gobind Singh vowed to destroy what had been established with the blessings of Guru Nanak.

Now, what was the cause of this total reversal of relations between the House of Babar and the House of Baba Nanak? Was it a sudden develop-

ment, resulting from the personal idiosyncrasies of one or the other? Or was it a gradual growth, generated and promoted by mutual actions and reactions; a natural, inevitable outcome of the historical process that had been going on ever since the historic meeting between Babar and Guru Nanak? To put the question in another form : Were the aims and ambitions of Guru Gobind Singh totally opposed to those of Guru Nanak? Had he, deliberately and causelessly, started on a career altogether inconsistent with, or repugnant to, the doctrines preached and practised by Guru Nanak? Or, on the other hand, were the policy and acts of Aurangzeb totally different from those of Babar and against the assurances given by him to Guru Nanak? Had he abandoned the policy which Babar had promised to adopt and did adopt? Had he begun to treat his non-Muhammadan subjects in a manner incompatible with the conditions which Guru Nanak had attached to his blessings? Again, was this policy of Aurangzeb a legacy from the past, or was it a deliberate innovation on his own part?

These questions pose a tough problem; for faulty, unwarranted, and untenable answers to them have tended to engulf Guru Gobind Singh in a cloud of misunderstandings so thick that he has been aptly called 'The Great Misunderstood'.

For a] proper appreciation of Guru Gobind Singh's relations with the Mughals, that is, with Aurangzeb and his son and successor, Bahadur Shah, and for arriving at a just estimate of the Guru's

work and personality, it is essential to find out correct and satisfactory answers to these questions. It shall be our endeavour here to find out such answers and to narrate how the aforesaid reversal of relations between the Houses of Baba Nanak and Babar took place actually.

In order to achieve that purpose, we shall have to briefly review the course of relations between the ten Gurus, on the one side, and the Mughal emperors, on the other.

It was during his third invasion of India that Babar met Guru Nanak Dev. This invasion, as the Guru had prophesied some twenty years earlier, took place in 1578 BK., *i.e.* 1521 A.D. The Guru was then at Saidpur (Eminabad) and was an eye-witness to the sack of the city and the wholesale massacre of its inhabitants. Women and children, as well as men who had escaped the sword, were taken prisoners. Guru Nanak and Mardana also suffered the same fate. Like others, the Guru had to carry on his head a load of the looted property to Babar's camp. Like others, he had, on reaching the camp, to grind corn for the victorious army. Babar came to know of Guru Nanak's piety and spiritual might. He was deeply grieved at the hard treatment meted out unwittingly to that faqir of Allah. He went to see him and to speak to him. "The Guru's words had such a magical effect on his mind that he showed him a special respect, while all his courtiers saluted him. The Emperor asked him to accept a present from him. The Guru replied that he wanted nothing for himself, but requested that the

captives of Eminabad might be released. Upon this the Emperor ordered that they should be set free and their properties restored to them.”

Then the Emperor besought the Guru to give him his blessings so that he might succeed in establishing an empire in India. ‘O Holy man of God,’ said he, ‘pray for me that my empire in India may last from generation to generation.’

The Guru replied, ‘If you desire to establish an empire in India, be one of the people of India. Make this country your home. Treat all your subjects, of whatever religion, with equal justice and kindness. “Deliver just judgement, reverence holy men, forswear wine and gambling. The monarch who indulges in these vices shall, if he survive, bewail his misdeeds. Be merciful to the vanquished, and worship God in spirit and in truth”. If you do all this, your empire will last for a long time.’¹

1 (a) The above account of the Guru’s meeting with Babar is based on tradition widely current among the Sikhs. As Cunningham puts it, “The Sikh accounts represent (Guru) Nanak to have met the Emperor Babar, and to have greatly edified the adventurous sovereign by his demeanour and conversation, while he perplexed him by saying that both were kings and were about to found dynasties of ten.” (Footnote, p. 40).

(b) Among the books which have described this meeting may be mentioned the following :—*Puratan Janamsakhi*, *From Ramanand to Ram Tirath* (G.A. Natesan, Madras), Macauliffe’s *Sikh Religion*, Kahan Singh’s *Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature*, Vir Singh’s *Guru Nanak Chamtkar*, Ganda Singh’s *Inkishaf-i-Haqiqat*.

(c) Valuable first-hand evidence would have been provided by *Babar’s Memoirs*, but it has to be noted with regret that among the gaps which occur in the *Memoirs*, as recorded by himself, one is about the period from 926 to 932 A.H., i.e., 1520 to 1526 A.D. If Babar had left a record of the events of this period, he would surely have mentioned his meeting with the Guru.

‘Needless to say that Babar did value and follow all this in his future life, and history bears abundant testimony to this. But for those who have read of Babar’s power, influence, and formidableness, the patriotic part played by the Guru does not stand in need of comments. He met the most terrible man on earth, a wink of whose brow was a sufficient order for putting millions to the sword, and, by his able intercession, turned him into the kindest ruler. This was the service that the Guru rendered to his country and countrymen.’¹

Babar’s son and successor, Humayun, followed in his father’s footsteps. When defeated by Sher Shah in 1540 A.D., and fleeing as a fugitive towards Lahore, he went out of his way to meet Guru Angad Dev, Second Guru Nanak, at Khadur. No doubt, he had been told of his father’s meeting with Guru Nanak and the latter’s advice and blessings. He, too, wanted to see the Guru occupying that Guru’s *gaddi*, and seek his spiritual help. He went to Khadur with offerings for the Guru. The Guru at the time was in a deep trance, minstrels were playing and singing the Guru’s hymns, and the Emperor was kept standing. He became violently angry, and put his hand on the hilt of his sword with the intention of striking the Guru. Nothing daunted, the Guru smiled and said, ‘You are so ready to use your sword against innocent, in-offensive men of God. Where was it when you had to face Sher Shah on the battle-field? In a cowardly manner

1. *From Ramanand to Ram Tirath*, p. 47.

you have fled from the battle and now, posing as a hero, you wish to attack a body of men engaged in their devotions.' Humayun repented and craved the Guru's spiritual assistance.¹ After his success in regaining his throne, he felt grateful to the Guru and desired to do him a favour. Guru Amar Das, who was then occupying Guru Nanak's *gaddi*, sent message to the Emperor to live honestly, not to desecrate holy places, and not again come to molest the Guru.²

Humayun's son and successor, Akbar, 'founder of the first synthetic religion of the world', respected the religious sentiments of his Hindu subjects and emancipated the State from its thralldom to Muslim theologians in order to create a common citizenship. His aim was to make it a secular State. He took special pains to meet and befriend the Sikh Gurus. He visited Guru Amar Das, Third Guru Nanak, at Goindwal. Before being permitted to see the Guru, he was required to dine in the Guru's *langar*, free kitchen for all, seated on the ground among the common people. He was glad to do so. He offered to make a grant for the maintenance of the Guru's *langar*, but the offer was declined. Later, towards the end of 1598, he visited Guru Arjan, Fifth Guru Nanak, again at Goindwal. He was delighted to hear passages read

1. Bhai Sahib Kahan Singh says that, on hearing the Guru's admonition, Humayun felt ashamed, begged his forgiveness, and received his blessings (vide *Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature*, p. 834).

2. Macauliffe, II, pp. 19-20.

out to him from the Holy Granth, under preparation at the time. He remitted a portion of the year's revenue to the *zimindars*, whose hardships were brought to his notice by the Guru.¹

1. *Khulasatut-Twarikh*, p. 425.

CHAPTER II

Jahangir to Aurangzeb

Akbar was succeeded by his son, Jahangir, in October 1605. He had little of the piety, mildness, liberal-mindedness, or religious tolerance of his father. While ascending the throne, he had promised his adherents that he would defend the Muhammadan religion.¹

‘The accession of Jahangir restored the forms and tenets of the Mohammadan faith, which had been discarded by his father, and with them, the spirit of persecution.’² ‘The Muslim theologians, who had not been pleased very much with Akbar’s attempts at secularizing the State, seem to have tried to win back their lost influence. As a consequence,

1. Smith, *Akbar*, p. 232.

2. Prinsep, *History of the Punjab*, p. 95.

Jahangir began to take greater interest in the fortunes of Islam in his dominions, re-started discrimination against non-Muslims, and helped conversions by giving daily allowance to converts to Islam.¹ His actions in this field 'made a contemporary poet of his court sing his praises as the great Muslim emperor who converted temples into mosques.'²

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Muhammadan in Jahangir got greatly alarmed at the daily increasing success of Guru Arjan in propagating his faith; for quite a large number of Muhammadans had renounced Islam and accepted the Guru as their religious leader. Such conversions to the Sikh faith were taking place every day. Under these circumstances, as Jahangir himself tells us, two courses were open to him : he should either convert Guru Arjan to Islam forcibly, or take steps to 'close his false traffic or religious shop.'³ He had been considering which course to choose, when luck provided him with an excuse which settled the matter for him. This is how it came about.

He had gone to Lahore in pursuit of his rebel son, Khusrau, and, after having defeated and captured him, was about to leave for Delhi, when a story was concocted and a report was lodged with him against the Guru. The latter was alleged

1. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughals*, p. 71.

2. *Ibid*, p. 73.

3. *Tuzik-i-Jahangiri*, p. 35.

to have helped Khusrau in his rebellious enterprise. Jahangir jumped at this 'God-given' opportunity to execute his long-cherished designs against the Guru. Without even a semblance of enquiry, he called the Guru to his presence and ordered his execution 'with tortures'. The Guru was subjected to all sorts of tortures in the burning heat of Lahore, and, finally, to add to his physical agonies, his blistered body was thrown into the cold water of the Ravi, which carried it away. This occurred on May 30, 1606, about seven months after Jahangir's accession to the throne.

‘(Guru) Arjan had seen clearly that it was impossible to preserve his followers without the aid of arms; and his last injunction to his son and successor, (Guru) Hargovind, was to sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain the largest military force he could muster.’¹ Because of that conviction, he had taken steps to get his son carefully trained in such manner as to make him a saint-soldier.²

Guru Hargobind, Sixth Guru Nanak, was convinced that his father's last injunction was wise and right. He felt that the times called for a body of saint-soldiers who would fear or shun no danger, and who would be ready, at all times, to sacrifice their all for the sacred cause. He began to train his followers accordingly.

1. C.H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, pp. 31-32.

2. Teja Singh & Ganda Singh. *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Vol I, p. 39; Macauliffe, III, p. 50.

Jahangir soon learnt that Guru Hargobind was arming his Sikhs and training them to fight for their faith. He was led to believe that the Guru had vowed to take revenge for his father's execution. Getting alarmed at these preparations, and regarding them as a prelude to an insurrection, Jahangir summoned the Guru to his presence. The Guru went, and was sent as a state prisoner to the fort of Gwalior. After some time, on representations being made in his behalf by the Muslim saint Mian Mir and others, the Emperor was moved to release the Guru¹

'Jahangir lived for several years after this, but he never gave any further trouble to Guru Hargobind. Rather he tried to befriend him...Jahangir would go hunting with the Guru and would make much of his company.'² He even paid a visit to Amritsar, and offered to complete the building of

1. The period of the Guru's stay at Gwalior, according to old records, ranges between 12 years to 40 days. According to the *Dabistan* of Mohsin Fani, the Guru's captivity lasted for twelve years. But this is impossible on the very face of it, as, during these very years, several children were born to him :— Baba Gurditta in 1613, Bibi Viro in 1615, Baba Suraj Mal in 1617, Baba Ani Rai in 1618, Baba Atal Rai in 1619, and Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1621. According to Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, the Guru could not have spent more than two years at Gwalior. He must have returned sometime in 1612. According to Forster, it was 'a short confinement' (p. 259). 'It may be that the Guru was sentenced to imprisonment for twelve years, but on representations being made by Mian Mir and others, he was released earlier.' (Teja Singh & Ganda Singh, p. 40)

2. 'Some writers, like Narang, Bannerji, Rose, etc., have been misled by a wrong translation of the *Dabistan* to assert that the Guru took up service under Jahangir. Shea and Troyler do say that the Guru entered Shah Jahan's service (274), but a look at the original gives a different story.' (T.S. & G.S., p. 41)

the Akal Takht at his own expense. The Guru, however, declined the offer.¹

Shah Jahan succeeded his father, Jahangir, in November 1627. With his accession, 'the Mughal empire entered a new phase. If Akbar was liberal in religious views and Jahangir indifferent to nicer questions of theology, Shah Jahan was an orthodox Muslim....He definitely proclaimed himself ordained by God, not only as the leader of the Sunnis, but also the destroyer of all those who did not conform to his ideas of Islam. He prohibited the conversion of Mohammadans and ordered the demolition of many temples.'²

It needs no saying that he changed the State policy towards the Sikhs and their Guru. It became one of intolerance and hostility. He desecrated their famous Baoli of Lahore in 1628 A.D. It was filled up and a mosque was erected on the site of the free kitchen or *langar* attached to it.³

Guru Hargobind had to fight four battles against the imperial forces sent against him. He won all of them. But, as his purpose had always been only self-defence and not conquest, he did not occupy even an inch of territory as a result of these victories.⁴

1. Teja Singh & Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

2. Sharma, *op. cit.* pp. 94, 96-97.

3. See *Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature*, by Kahan Singh, p. 2573.

4. See Teja Singh & Ganda Singh, *op. cit.* p. 45 : "Guru Hargobind had won four battles, but as his purpose had always been defensive, he did not acquire even an inch of territory as a result of these victories." See also Malcolm's *Sketch*, p. 44.

In order to avoid such interruptions in his work of religious ministry, he shifted his residence at first to Kartarpur in the Jullundur Doab and then to Kiratpur. He went about preaching his religion and making converts. 'When he took up his residence at Kiratpur, he succeeded in converting a large number of Muslims. In the words of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (P. 203) "not a Muslim was left between the hills near Kiratpur and the frontiers of Tibet and Khotan."¹ This could not but have enraged the Emperor, who had prohibited conversion of Muslims, and who considered himself ordained by God as 'destroyer of all those who did not conform to his ideas of Islam'. He stepped up his activities as a 'persecuting king'.

It must be conceded, however, that Shah Jahan's 'active career of a persecuting king' lasted only for a short time. Towards the end of his reign we actually find him restraining the religious zeal of his son Aurangzeb.

Guru Har Rai succeeded Guru Hargobind as Seventh Guru Nanak in March 1644. Like his father, he was a soldier. He kept a strong force of 2200 horsemen, fully equipped and trained, and ready to be employed in case of need. But he was not molested by the Mughal government. He himself was, by nature, a man of peace. He was bent upon following the policy of peace. The only time when he had to take out his forces was when the

1. Sharma, *op. cit.* p. 107.

sons of Shah Jahan were fighting for the throne of Delhi, but he took care not to shed blood. Dara Shikoh, a Sufi by faith, was an admirer of Sikhism; nay, 'a sort of a disciple of the Guru'. In 1648, the Guru had saved his life by sending him a rare medicine. In 1658, when Prince Dara was being hotly pursued by Aurangzeb's army, he went to Goindwal, and asked the Guru to save him from being captured. The Guru sent out a detachment of his men to hold the passage of the river Beas against the pursuing army, until the Prince was able to reach a place of comparative safety.¹

Aurangzeb was greatly annoyed at this affront. He ascended the throne in May 1658, after imprisoning his father and wading through the blood of his kinsmen and brothers. As soon as he was established on the throne, he summoned the Guru to his presence. He wanted to see if anything could be discovered in Sikhism which went against Islam and which could, therefore, be used as a pretext for prosecuting the Guru. The Guru did not answer the summons in person, but sent his elder son, Sri Ram Rai, to satisfy the Emperor. Sri Ram Rai was able to please Aurangzeb by his clever answers, though he had, for that purpose, to change the wording of a line of Guru Nanak's writings. By doing this he incurred the displeasure of his father, who declared him unfit for the responsible position

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *op. cit.* p.48; Kahan Singh, *op. cit.* p. 1886; Munshi Sujjan Rai, *Khulasatut Twarikh*.

of Guruship, and chose his younger son, Sri Har Krishan, to succeed him.

Guru Har Krishan succeeded his father in October 1661 as Eighth Guru Nanak. Ram Rai had become a favourite at the court of Aurangzeb. He complained to the Emperor against his father's decision setting aside his 'superior' claims to the *gaddi*. The Emperor decided to act in a manner as if he had a right to interfere, and impose his will, in a purely personal, domestic affair of the Guru, and as if *gur-gaddi* had been a jagir bestowed by the Emperor. He summoned Guru Har Krishan to Delhi. The Guru went and stayed at the bungalow of Mirza Jai Singh at Raisina. The Emperor was convinced that the choice made by Guru Har Rai was fit and proper. Ram Rai's suit was dismissed.

Guru Har Krishan died of small-pox while still at Delhi on March 30, 1664. According to his injunction, he was succeeded by Guru Tegh Bahadur. Soon after Guru Tegh Bahadur's accession to *gur-gaddi*, a new chapter opened in the Sikh Gurus' relations with the Mughals. That unhappy change was due to the intolerant religious policy of Emperor Aurangzeb.

CHAPTER III

The Religious Policy of Aurangzeb

By the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur's accession to *gur-gaddi* as Ninth Guru Nanak, Aurangzeb had securely established himself on the throne of Delhi. Now he embarked on his long-cherished religious policy of bigoted persecution and religious discrimination. It was intended not only to satisfy the inhuman Sunni bigot within himself, but also to please the fanatic orthodox Muhammadans in India and abroad. His cruel and homicidal treatment of his father, brothers, and their families, on the one hand, and the cold-blooded murder of pious and liberal-minded *Sufis* and *Shias*, on the other, had earned for him the disapprobation, nay, even condemnation, of the saner section of the whole Muslim world. For example, 'The Sheriff of Mecca refused to receive his convoys although they brought

him many presents. Shah Abbas of Persia hated Aurangzeb and condemned him for his treatment of his father and his brothers. He scoffed at the title, which Aurangzeb had assumed, of the "Conqueror of the World". He went so far as to threaten to march an army into Delhi. Aurangzeb was in utmost alarm.¹

Aurangzeb was anxious to rehabilitate himself in the good books of his coreligionists. Spurred in part by that anxiety, and partly by fanatic Muhammadan divines, but chiefly by the promptings of his own merciless, bigoted heart, he embarked 'on a militant policy of religious persecution', and 'allowed the religious fanatic to get the upper hand of the king'. 'He had resolved,' says Latif, 'that the belief in one God and the Prophet should be, not the prevailing, but the only religion of the empire of Hindustan. He issued mandates to the viceroys and governors of provinces to destroy pagodas and idols throughout the dominions.'² The emperor appointed Mullas, with a party of horse to each, to check all ostentatious display of idol worship, and, some time afterwards, he forbade fairs on Hindu festivals, and issued a circular to all governors and men in authority prohibiting employment of Hindus in the offices of State immediately under them, and commanding them to offer all such offices to

1. J.T. Wheeler, *A Short History of India*, pp. 62, 170.

2. In 1669 'orders were issued to the governors of all provinces that they should destroy the schools and temples of the infidels and put an end to the educational activities as well as the practices of the religion of the Kafirs.' (*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 81, and Orme's *Fragment*, 85.

Mohammadans only. All servants of the State were ordered to embrace the Mohammadan religion under pain of dismissal. A large number of jogis, sanniasis, and other religious men were driven out of the king's dominion. He re-imposed *jizia* or poll-tax¹ on Hindus throughout his dominion.² Goods belonging to Hindu merchants were subjected to customs duty twice as heavy as demanded from Mohammadan traders.

‘The Sikhs, who were also infidels, could not expect better treatment than the Hindus, and we are told that “Aurangzeb ordered the temples of the Sikhs to be destroyed and Guru’s agents, *masands*, for collecting tithes and presents of the faithful, to be expelled from the cities”.³ By his wanton persecution and his deliberate suppression of the religions of the “infidels”, Aurangzeb raised a whirlwind throughout the empire and the Sikhs could not remain unaffected.’⁴

It was in the reign of this monarch that Guru Tegh Bahadur had to carry on his work of preparing

1. ‘The officially avowed policy in imposing the *Jazia* was to increase the number of Muslims by putting pressure on the Hindus. As the contemporary observer Manucci noticed, “Many Hindus who were unable to pay turned Mohammadan to obtain relief from the collectors—Aurangzeb rejoices”.’ (J.N. Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p. 158)

‘With the object of curbing the infidels and of distinguishing the land of the faithful from an infidel land, the *jizia* or poll-tax was imposed on the Hindus throughout all the provinces.’ (Khafi Khan)

2. S.M.Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 176.

3. Khafi Khan, II, 51-52; also Sarkar’s *Aurangzeb*, III, 354.

4. Bannerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, pp., 59 66.

the people to free themselves from oppression and bondage, and developing in them a longing and an urge to assert their rights as human beings. He carried out extensive tours throughout India for preaching his faith and ideals. By virtue of his personal qualities and activities, he came to be known and respected far and wide. 'He was known throughout Upper India, was highly revered by Rajput princes, and was actually worshipped by the peasantry of the Punjab, and was generally looked upon as a champion of the Hindus.'¹

'Aurangzeb's religious policy, which aimed at the establishment of an orthodox Sunni State, had now raised a whirlwind throughout the country and it was idle to expect that a man of the position and eminence of Guru Tegh Bahadur could remain unaffected.'² As a matter of fact, his personal influence and popular propaganda formed a great obstacle in the way of Aurangzeb's proselytising campaign. Consequently, he decided to put an end to the Guru's life and activities. He did that without any compunction or delay. How he did it will be told in another chapter.

1. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 115.

2. Bannerjee, *Op. cit.*, pp 57-58.

CHAPTER IV

Guru Gobind Singh's Education and Training

As we have said in the last chapter, Aurangzeb's religious policy led him to decide that Guru Tegh Bahadur must be put out of the way. Now, Guru Gobind Singh played an important part in the event which led to Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. Therefore, before coming to that event itself and its sequel, we shall give a brief account of Guru Gobind Singh's life preceding that event.

Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna on the seventh day of the light half of Poh (*Poh sudi, 7*), 1723 BK., corresponding to December 22, 1666. His father had gone thither in the course of one of his extensive religious tours. Leaving his family at Patna, he had proceeded further east towards

Assam and Dacca. It was during his absence in those parts that his only son was born at Patna.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had to cut short his tour and hurry back to the Panjab. Aurangzeb's religious policy of bigoted persecution had been intensified with his order of 1669. It had terrorized the people. How could the Guru stay away from his people when they were in great distress? He felt that his place was with them. Hence he hurried back to the Panjab without even seeing his new-born only son. On reaching among his people, he gave them what solace he could give with his soul-stirring songs of the Lord. He taught them to strike fear in none, and to be afraid of none. He also did a deal of thinking as to what should be done to save the people from tyranny and to mend the tyrants.

Soon he sent for his family from Patna. At Anandpur, Sri Gobind Rai, as Guru Gobind Singh was then called, passed the happiest days of his life under his father's care and guidance. His education and training were taken in hand under his father's directions. As he tells us in his *Bachittar Natak*, his father gave him 'instructions of various kinds'. Let us pause here to have an idea of the sort of education which he must have received.

We have to bear in mind that he had, in due course, to shoulder the responsibilities of leading his people in those difficult times. The 'instructions of various kinds' were undoubtedly intended to equip him for that arduous undertaking.

First and foremost, he must have studied the sacred hymns of the Holy Granth as well as the compositions of his father. This study had begun at Patna under the guidance of his mother and her brother, uncle Kirpal. He read and pondered over the hymns with such care and concentration that they all got engraved in his memory, so much so, that he was able, later on, to reproduce them all exactly, every word and syllable, in the same order and with the same spellings.

What inspirations did he get, what lessons did he imbibe, from this study? Let us try to picture. He read there :—

(1)

Desirest thou the game of love to play?
Put thy head on thy palm,
With a heart resolute and calm,
Steadily follow me on this way.
If choosest thou this path to tread,
Be prepared, O dear,
Without wavering or fear,
In perfect joy, to lay down thy head.

(2)

To die is the privilege of the valiant men,
Provided they die in a cause approved.

(3)

Him alone should we deem to be truly brave
Who fighteth for the helpless and the weak,
Who doth get to pieces cut and falleth dead,
But never in flight doth safety seek.

(4)

Those who worship the Fearless Lord
Get free from fear of every sort.

(5)

Who frighten no one and fear none even in
dream,
Them alone should men of learning true we
deem.

He read the 'hymns of blood' which Guru Nanak had sung on beholding the slaughter and sufferings of his countrymen during Babar's invasion, one of which hymns contained the following lines :—

Such beating they got; they did so bitterly cry;
Didst thou feel no pain nor any sympathy?
O Creator, Thou belongest to all.
If a powerful party strike another of equal
might,
There would no cause or occasion for anger
be.
But when a ravenous lion on a herd of cows
doth fall,
The master of the herd should then his man-
liness show.

His thoughts on reading such hymns must have run on some such lines : 'Even now ravenous lions are falling upon and doing havoc among the herd of cows. It is time for the master of the herd to show his manliness. But who is the master of this wretched herd? There seems to be none among those who arrogate to themselves the rights of masters.

The ruling and fighting races among the victims of oppression have forgotten their duty. Some holy man of God has to take up that duty. All things considered, father alone is best suited to act as the master of this herd and save it from the lions preying upon it; and, after him, I, no doubt; for has not the Lord sent me into the world "to extend *dharma* (righteousness) everywhere, to seize and destroy the doers of sin and evil, to protect the saints and to extirpate all tyrants?" That duty has to be done, come what may.'

Besides reading and pondering over Gurbani, he, no doubt, acquainted himself with the past history of his people since Guru Nanak, that is, with the past which was to be his heritage. He must have learnt how Guru Nanak had shared the sufferings of his countrymen during Babar's invasion and become one of his prisoners in order to meet and reform him; how Babar had sought the Guru's blessings for success in his enterprise of founding an empire in India; how he had promised to be a kind and just ruler and steer clear of bigotry and religious persecution; how Akbar had met the third, the fourth, and the fifth Guru, and respected and befriended them; how Jahangir had given up the policy of religious tolerance pursued by his predecessors, and, with a view to putting an end to the Sikh movement, had ordered the arrest and execution of Guru Arjan; how Guru Arjan had enjoined upon his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, to arm himself and his followers in order to meet

force with force; how Jahangir had imprisoned Guru Hargobind because of the latter's military preparations; how Guru Hargobind had fought and won four battles against Shah Jahan's forces; how Shah Jahan had demolished and desecrated Sikh sacred places; how Guru Har Rai had foiled Aurangzeb's army in order to save the fugitive Dara from being captured; how his own father had, on learning of his people's sufferings at Aurangzeb's hands, come back hurriedly from his tour of Assam; how Sikh temples had been demolished and Sikh holy places desecrated under Aurangzeb's orders; and how non-Muslims were being subjected to all sorts of coercion, tyranny, and persecution in order to force them to embrace Islam.

All this and much more he must have learnt of his past and about the relations which had subsisted between the Mughals and the Sikh Gurus. What were the feelings, thoughts, and resolves which might have thronged into his mind and heart, and stirred him to his innermost depths, as he pondered over all this?

In addition to this instruction in history and Gurbani, he received military training. He assiduously practised horsemanship and use of arms, and studied the art of war.

It was thus that Guru Tegh Bahadur got his son educated and trained for the task that was waiting for him.

CHAPTER V

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom

Guru Gobind Singh's career of instruction and training under his father's care and guidance was cut short abruptly by a great event which was to exercise tremendous, far-reaching influence not only on his own subsequent life, but also on the history of his people and his country. This event brought about the first impact on him of Aurangzeb's religious policy. It came as a call to him to make the first of a series of sacrifices which were to be his unique contribution to the cause of his people's emancipation and his country's freedom, and which were to shake the mighty Mughal power to its foundations. The call which came to him was that he should send his father to wear the crown of martyrdom in order to 'protect the frontal mark and the sacrificial thread of the Hindus', to defend

the faith and freedom of conscience of his neighbours, and, incidentally, of course, that of his own people. This is how it happened.

In obedience to the Emperor's general orders issued in 1669, Sher Afghan Khan, the Emperor's viceroy in Kashmir, set about converting the Hindus of his Suba by the sword, and massacred those who refused to give up their faith. This went on for some time. Then he addressed himself to the Kashmiri Pandits. He sent for them and told them of the Emperor's orders, which he had but to obey. They were told to choose between Islam and death, and to do so without any delay. They sued for a respite of six months to consider whether they should embrace Islam or die for their religion. It seems that Sher Afghan Khan had come to feel that he had had enough of slaughter done to please the Emperor. He was glad to accede to this request; for it opened up a possibility of converting the Kashmiri Pandits and their followers without any resort to the sword.

The Kashmiri Pandits, after long and vain prayers to their gods and goddesses, resolved to get Guru Tegh Bahadur's advice; for he was regarded by all "as a champion of the Hindus". A deputation of theirs "waited upon Guru Tegh Bahadur and complained to him about the excesses committed by the Muslim Government against the Hindu population of Kashmir,"¹, they informed

1. Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

him of what had passed between themselves and the viceroy of Kashmir, and begged him to guide and help them to preserve their ancient faith.

Their woeful tale was but an instance of what Aurangzeb's policy of bigoted persecution and forcible conversion was leading to in the whole country. It plunged the Guru in deep and anxious thought. His son, who had just come in, saw this, and asked him what had made him so pensive and sad. The Guru replied, 'My son, hard times are ahead. The country is in the grip of fierce, bigoted, fanatic tyrants. Their misguided zeal for Islam of their own conception has killed their humanity. They have become brutal. I feel that the only way to debrutalize them, to revive their human nature, is that a great, holy person should sacrifice himself. But how and where to find such a one? That is the problem which has made me sad and pensive, my son.'

His son, who was yet hardly eight years old, at once replied, 'For that sacrifice, dear father, who can be worthier than you?' On hearing this, the Guru felt relieved. He was satisfied that his son would be a worthy successor to him and prove equal to the task of leading his people through the difficult times that were in the offing. Accordingly, he told the deputationists to go and tell the viceroy, and, through him, the Emperor, "Guru Tegh Bahadur is our leader and guide. First make him a Musalman and then we shall follow his example and adopt your faith of our own accord."

They acted accordingly. They knew it for certain that the Guru would neither betray them nor abandon his faith. The governor promptly reported the whole matter to the Emperor. The latter issued orders at once that Guru Tegh Bahadur be arrested and brought to his court at Delhi. But before the soldiers despatched to arrest him could reach Anandpur, the Guru started on an extensive, whirlwind tour, with a view to exhorting the people to shed all fear, to face oppression and tyranny with resolute calmness, and to prepare themselves for effective resistance when the time should come for that. His ultimate aim was to reach Delhi of his own accord and give himself up to the Mughal authorities there.

He passed through Malwa and the south-eastern Panjab, heartening the people to be ready to meet the challenge of the times ahead, and winning the hearts and devotion of large numbers. Many prominent Muslims were among his new devotees as new converts to his faith. Aurangzeb's soldiers had been all the time making fruitless efforts to locate and arrest him. Reaching Agra, he caused his identity to be revealed to Mughal officials. He was, thereupon, arrested, chained, and taken to Delhi under a heavy guard of fully armed soldiers. On reaching there, he was thrown into prison, still in chains, and heavily and closely guarded.

Aurangzeb was at that time encamped at Hasan Abdal, midway between Rawalpindi and Kabul. He had gone thither to quell an Afghan rebellion.

Before proceeding to that side, however, he had ordered Guru Tegh Bahadur's arrest. He had also issued orders as to what was to be done after the arrest had been effected. In accordance with those orders the Guru was asked 'to show miracles if he was a true Guru or to embrace Islam'. He refused to do either. The matter was reported to the Emperor for orders.

All the time the Guru was kept in chains, tortured, and closely guarded. One of his companions, Bhai Mati Das, was sawn alive. His other three companions managed to escape. It was in this condition that, in order to be sure that his son would be able to rise to the occasion and prove equal to the responsibility about to devolve on his shoulders, he wrote to him a letter, saying :—

‘My strength is exhausted; I am in chains;
and no remedy or expedient is at hand—

God alone, saith Nanak, is now my refuge;
may He come to my rescue as He did in
the case of the elephant (in the classical
story).

‘My companions and associates have all
abandoned me; no one has remained with
me to the last.

In this calamity, saith Nanak, God alone is
my support.’¹

1. *Shlokas*, 53 and 55 of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

To this his son sent the following reply:—

‘Strength is there; the chains are loosened; and every remedy, every expedient, is at hand.

Nanak, everything is in your hands; it is you alone that can assist yourself.’¹

The reply heartened the Guru about the future of his people and his country. He felt sure that they would be well looked after by his son. Hence, nominating him as his successor, he made ready for death. He declared his belief that :—

‘When Guru Gobind is there, the Lord’s name and His saints will flourish.’²

In the beginning of November, 1675, Aurangzeb’s final orders were received. The Guru was publicly beheaded in the Chandni Chauk³, Delhi, on November 11, 1675. ‘The stern monarch had the Guru’s body publicly exposed in the streets of Delhi, to serve as a warning to the “infidels”.’

‘Many a saintly soul was caught in the whirlwind of religious persecution raised by Aurangzeb. But perhaps few religious executions had such far-reaching consequences as that of the Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, which exercised a decided influence on the subsequent history of the Punjab.’⁴

1. This couplet is the only composition of Guru Gobind Singh in Guru Granth Sahib. It occurs at No. 54 among the *Shlokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

2. *Shloka* 56 of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

3. The place where the Guru was beheaded is the site of a Gurdwara called *Sis Ganj*.

4. Edwardes and Garret, *The Mughal Rule in India*, p. 124.

‘His execution was universally regarded by Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith. The whole of the Punjab began to burn with indignation and revenge.’¹ With the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, ‘Sikhism was threatened with extinction, root and branch, and there was no other method of self-defence than the use of arms.’² The situation needed a leader under whose banner the Sikhs could give a taste of their steel to the fanatic persecutors of their race, and avenge the insult done to their religion. This leader was found in Guru Gobind Singh.

1. Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Bannerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

2. Bannerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

PART II

Guru Gobind Singh and the Mughals

CHAPTER VI

Effect of Father's Martyrdom on Guru Gobind Singh

What effect did this Aurangzebian barbarity produce on Guru Gobind Singh? We shall not consider here the effect which it had on the Guru's plans and efforts about the organization of his followers; for that is beyond the scope of the present study. We shall here confine ourselves to the effect it had on him in the matter of his relations with the Mughals and their government.

We must remember that Guru Gobind Singh was then a mere child of hardly nine years. An ordinary person in his position would, most probably, have broken down with grief and terror, or cursed and vowed to wreak vengeance on the murderers of his father. Indeed, many writers, basing their

conjectures on what an ordinary man's, rather a child's, reactions would have been, have said similar things about the effect of the catastrophe on the child Guru Gobind Singh. For example, Latif says that the event 'had such a strong impression on the mind of (Guru) Gobind (Singh) that he longed to wreak vengeance on the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race, and became the inveterate and irreconcilable enemy of every Mohammadan.'¹ Other writers have expressed similar views. For example, Cunningham says, 'The violent end of the martyr Guru made a deep impression on the mind of (Guru) Gobind (Singh), and in brooding over his own loss and the fallen condition of his country, he became the irreconcilable foe of the Mohamman name, and conceived the noble idea of moulding the vanquished Hindus into a new and aspiring people.'²

The allegation that Guru Gobind Singh became 'the inveterate and irreconcilable enemy of every Mohammadan' or 'the irreconcilable foe of the Mohamman name' is fully and completely refuted by the undeniable fact that his army contained a large number of Muhammadans. They were his devotees. They fought his battles against even their own coreligionists and served him with their lives; for they knew that his wars were against tyranny and oppression, and not against Muhammadans as

1. *History of the Punjab*, p. 261.

2. *History of the Sikhs*, p. 66.

such.¹

Moreover, there are numerous passages in his writings which tell us that his love embraced all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, or clime. Here are a few examples:—

(1)

As He spoke unto me so do I speak unto men,
I bear no enmity to any one.

(2)

Some are Hindus and some are Muhamma-
dans; among the latter, some are *Sunnis* and
some are *Shias*;

Still, remember that all human beings are of
one race.

Karta (the Creator) and *Karim* (the Beneficent)
are the same;

Razak (the Provider) and *Rahim* (the Merciful)
are the same;

All these names refer to one and the same
God of all; let no man even by mistake
suppose there is a difference.²

Know that all serve but the one God, who is
the one Lord of all; know that His form is
one, and that He is the one light diffused
in all.

1. 'Nor will it possibly be true that he "swore eternal war with the haughty and cruel Mohammadans". His war was with tyranny and oppression; and the quarrel with the Mohammadans and the achievement of political dominion by the Sikhs followed as, more or less, inevitable corollaries of this basic conception.' (Bannerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 118).

2. That is, there is not one God for the Hindus and another for the Muhammadans.

(3)

The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu worship and the Muhammadan prayer are the same;

All men are the same, although in appearance they do seem different.

The bright and the dark, the ugly and the beautiful, the Hindus and the Muslims, have all developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries.

All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, and the same build—a compound of the same four elements—earth, air, fire, and water.

(4)

Allah and *Abhekh* are the same ; the Purans and the Quran are the same ;

They are all alike; it is the one God who created them all.

(5)

Again, when speaking of the purpose for which he was sent into the world by God, he says,

On this account have I come into the world—
To spread *dharma* everywhere,
To seize and destroy the evil and the sinful.
I assumed birth for the purpose
Of spreading the faith, saving the saints,
And extirpating all tyrants.

Nowhere does he say, even hint, that his life's purpose was to destroy the Muhammadans or even

the tyrants and evil-doers among them alone. Again, though he knew what the Mughal emperors had done to Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind, yet, when speaking of those Gurus, he has no words of blame for the emperors; he does not even hint at what the Mughals had done to them. Here is what he writes about those two ancestors of his:—

When Arjan was going to the city of God,
He appointed Har Gobind in his place.

When Har Gobind was going to God's
city,

He seated Har Rai in his place.

Finally, when speaking of the execution of his own father, which act is said to have made him an inveterate enemy of every Muhammadan, he says:—

‘Thus did the Master protect the frontal mark
and the sacrificial thread of the Hindus;

Thus did he bring about a great event in this
dark age.¹

This much he did for the sake of holy men,
He gave up his life, but uttered not a groan.
He suffered martyrdom for the sake of *dharmā*,
He laid down his life but swerved not from
his principles.

God's people would feel ashamed

1. Here we have most reliable contemporary evidence from one who was most intimately concerned with the event. According to Guru Gobind Singh (and who can claim to know better?) Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed not as a rebel or disturber of peace, as writers like Cunningham and Latif would have us believe, but because he volunteered to make the supreme sacrifice in order to protect the religion of the Hindus.

To perform miracles which are mere tricks of mountebanks and cheats.¹

Having broken his potsherd on the head of the Delhi king,² he departed to the city of God.

None else ever did such a thing as he.

At his departure there was mourning in this world,

There were wails of woe in the world

And shouts of joyful welcome in heaven.'

Further on, he says,

'When I arrived at the age to perform my religious duties,

My father departed to the city of God.'

Is this the language of one who was boiling with rage and consumed with hatred for the murderers of his father? Of one who was impatiently longing to wreak vengeance on them? He is cool, serene, and self-possessed. He does not even represent the public execution of his father as 'murder'. He calls it a great event brought about by his father himself and 'his departure to the city of God'. He does not say that his father was murdered, though murdered he was. He has no harsh epithet for

1. That is, Guru Tegh Bahadur could have saved himself if he had agreed to perform some miracle; but he scorned to do so for the reason given above by Guru Gobind Singh. This also confirms that the Guru was asked to show some miracle, but he refused to do so because it was against his principles.

2. That is, having made Aurangzeb, Emperor of Delhi, responsible for his death. This would show that Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested and executed under orders of Aurangzeb himself.

Aurangzeb. He does not call him the murderer of his father. He rather says that his martyr father made Aurangzeb responsible for his death and then departed to the city of God. That is, Guru Tegh Bahadur voluntarily laid down his life in order to protect the religion of the Hindus.

Thus, though the effect of his father's martyrdom on Guru Gobind Singh's mind must have been deep and lasting, yet he controlled himself in order to harness all his energies to the task before him. What was that task? We shall speak of it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

The Task and the Means

It is true that Guru Gobind Singh did not break out into bursts of wrath against the murderers of his father. Still, it does not mean that he did not feel that a great and unpardonable wrong had been done to him and his people. It does not mean that he meekly accepted the situation created by Aurangzeb's policy of bigoted persecution. It does not mean that he quietly resigned himself to his 'fate', that he stifled within him the 'impulse of avenging his own and his country's wrongs'. It does not mean that he had forgotten or decided to ignore God's mandate to him regarding evil-doers and tyrants. Nor does it mean that he had abandoned his resolve to destroy, root and branch, the power of the Mughals under whose orders holy men of God could be tortured and butchered for no fault

but that of refusing to abandon their faith or that of pleading that no one should be forced to give up his own religion.

Now, Guru Gobind Singh was keenly alive to, and deeply stirred by, the conditions prevailing in the country. He fully realized what his duty was under those conditions. He was firm, unshakably firm, in his resolve to discharge the duty assigned to him by God, namely, that of destroying the tyrants and making the world safe for saints and holy men. Yet, while he hated sin and wanted to put an end to it, even by destroying the sinners, he did not hate the sinners. He loved them. He would fain have reformed and mended them. He was fully conscious of the fact that the dreaded Mughal, Aurangzeb, had raised a whirlwind which threatened to sweep away all 'infidels' including the Sikhs. He was fully aware of the fact that the Mughal government had declared itself an open enemy of his faith, and that the first result of that open breach had been the execution of his father. The Sikhs and Sikhism were threatened with extinction. It was his duty to save them. He saw that ravenous lions were attacking herds of cows and working havoc among them. He had to take upon himself the role of the master of the herds, and to show his manliness. He had to openly oppose, and thereby cripple, the power of the tyrannical Mughals. That was the only way to save his faith and his people, and to free his country from the tyrants' yoke.

This, as he knew, was a gigantic and arduous

task. But what were the means at his disposal ? What were the odds against him, the disadvantages of his situation?

His resources were slender and scanty. The work of military organization and martial inspiration, begun so well by his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, had been checked after him. That had been owing, partly, to the peaceful nature of the succeeding Gurus, and, partly, to the rigour of Aurangzeb's rule. Hence, the martial spirit instilled into the Sikhs' hearts by Guru Hargobind had gone to slumber. It had to be awakened, developed, and activated. The whole work had to be done almost from the beginning. He had to create his army and to forge his sword with which he was to fight.

Again, though the Hindu masses were bitter against the galling yoke of Mughal tyranny, yet the so-called natural leaders of the Hindus, Hindus of position and rank, were most officiously loyal to the government. They were bitterly hostile to all popular progressive movements. They feared that any show of sympathy with those movements, or that of even neutrality, would displease their Muslim masters and deprive them of their office, land, and power.

Moreover, the Panjab was the first to be conquered by invaders from the west. The Mughal government was established there more thoroughly than anywhere else in India. Muhammadan population was the biggest in the Panjab. The

Muhammadian masses were sure to oppose any movement which aimed at the overthrow of their coreligionists' government.

In addition to these serious disadvantages, the Guru had to contend with the members of his own family whom personal grudges had driven into the enemy's camp. They were ever at pains to thwart, harass, and harm the Guru.

Such was the position in which Guru Gobind Singh found himself in 1675 after the martyrdom of his father. The whole province was terror-stricken under Aurangzeb's vigorously prosecuted campaign of bigoted persecution. As we know, he was a child of less than nine. He had no army at his back. To think of revenge or active resistance was, as yet, out of the question. Howsoever strong his determination might have been, it would have been suicidal then to declare war against one of the mightiest empires of the world ruled by one of the most fanatic, callous, and cruel Mughal emperors.

CHAPTER VIII

Preparation for the Task

In view of the conditions frowning on him, his slender and scanty resources, and his tender age, Guru Gobind Singh was in no hurry to invite a conflict. He needed sufficient preparatory period in which to form and mature his plans. He had also to chalk out the lines on which to work in order to implement those plans and achieve his life's objective. He would strike only then when the time was ripe for the venture, *i.e.* when he and his men were in a position to strike most effectively. He had to awake his countrymen to new and noble corporate life, to inspire them with till-then-unknown sentiments of nationality and nationalism, with the will and zeal to dare, do, and die for the common cause. He wanted to make himself and his people so strong in body, mind and spirit, that the foreign

tyrannical government would no longer be able to withstand them or to keep them under subjection. He planned to transform the 'Brotherhood of God-fearing Republicans' founded by Guru Nanak into 'a military commonwealth of God-fearing, Republican Saint-soldiers'. He felt sure that no tyranny could hold out against them for long.

Therefore, the immediate problem for Guru Gobind Singh was to find a quiet, snug retreat where he could work in quiet seclusion. He also wanted to save himself from the wrath of the Mughal Emperor. It was too much to expect that Aurangzeb's hostility would cease with the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh thought it best to retire still further into the hills which enclosed a natural fortress for him. In that seclusion he would mature his plans to extirpate the tyrants and to emancipate his down-trodden race. There may have been another reason, too, for the Guru's shifting his residence from Anandpur. It is possible that the hill chief, in whose territory the Guru resided, got alarmed at his war-like preparations. Consequently, he might have raised some difficulties about the Guru's continued stay there. He feared that it might involve him in troubles with the Mughal government. For that reason, also, the Guru might have thought it better to leave the place and retire further into the hills.¹

1. That some such considerations had their share in the Guru's departure from Anandpur is borne out by what he says about it in his *Bachittar Natak*, namely, 'I had then to leave that territory, or that place had to be left by me'.

He moved to Paonta in the state of Nahan, where, on the land offered by the ruler, he built a fort. There he stayed for several years.

In the seclusion of his retreat in the midst of the Himalayan hills, the Guru devoted himself to the task of preparing himself and his followers for the coming struggle against tyranny and oppression. Details of the preparations need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that, as Narang puts it, 'he chalked out for himself the lines on which he was to work ; and his plan was formed with such a decision and completeness that not a tittle of the policy he had settled was abandoned or changed by him throughout his chequered and stormy career'.

As we shall see, the Guru had to return to Anandpur after a few years' stay at Paonta. Even at Anandpur he continued, unabated, his preparations for the task before him. The preparations went on in a planned and systematic manner until they were cut short by wars forced on him by the hill chiefs and the Mughals. In the short time permitted to him, he was able to work wonders. In the words of Latif, 'Awakening his countrymen to a new and noble life, and arousing their latent energies to a sense of common duty, he blended the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee, and inspired the peaceful ploughman with ideas of military glory and national aggrandisement. Composed in mind and matured in experience, he resolved to reform religious corruptions and to put an end to social abuses and

depredations. Being acknowledged as the *Sat Guru* of the Sikhs, his well-stored mind conceived, for the first time, the noble idea of transforming the degenerate Hindus into an inspiring race and of moulding the Sikh nation into a religious and military commonwealth, and, in the words of Elphinstone, "he executed his designs with the systematic spirit of a Grecian Law Giver".

It is a moot point to consider what success the Guru would have achieved in his plans if he had been allowed to complete and implement them as he had planned, and if the work had not been interrupted by wars forced on him, at first, by the hill chiefs and then by the Mughals.

CHAPTER IX

Preparatory Work Interrupted

As said already, the preparatory work begun by Guru Gobind Singh in the seclusion of his hill-retreat was prematurely interrupted after a short time. The hill chiefs began to smell in it a grave danger to their authority and power. Many of them made a joint attack on him, when he was at Paonta. As the Guru says in the *Bachittar Natak*, the attack was wholly unprovoked and for no cause. A severe battle was fought at Bhangani in April 1689.¹ The Guru won the battle, but did not follow

1. Some writers, like Gian Singh and Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, are of the view that the battle of Bhangani "took place towards the end of February, 1686". In support of this date the latter two advance the argument, "The *Suraj Prakash* says that, nine months after the return of the Guru from Paonta to Anandpur, his first son, Ajit Singh, was born. The date of Ajit Singh's birth is accepted on all hands to be *Magh sudi 4*, 1743 BK. (Nov. 9, 1686). This would place the battle in the month of
(Contd. on next page)

it up with any political advantage. As perhaps he did not consider it convenient to remain at Paonta any longer, he returned to Anandpur and continued his preparations there. In addition to preparing his people's bodies, mind, and heart for the coming encounter with the organized might of the foes, and acquiring military stores and equipment, he erected four strong forts at Anandpur—Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Keshgarh, and Fatehgarh.

(Contd. from previous page)

February, 1686. Further evidence may be adduced from a letter of appreciation given by the Guru to Pir Budhu Shah of Sadhaura. This letter is dated *Phagum sudi* 12, 1742 Bk., which corresponds to Feb. 25, 1686. This letter must have been given soon after the battle."

(*A Short History of the Sikhs*, P. 64)

If Baba Ajit Singh was born nine months after the Guru's return to Anandpur and on November 9, 1686, the Guru must have returned in the first week of February, 1686. Admittedly, the battle was fought before the Guru's return. It could not have been fought "towards the end of February, 1686".

Moreover, the writers say that the battle took place about nine months before the birth of Baba Ajit Singh which occurred on *Magh sudi* 4, 1743 Bk. But *Magh sudi* 4, 1743 corresponds not to Nov. 9, 1686, but to January 7, 1687. That would place the battle in April 1686. The letter of Feb. 25, 1686 cannot have any connexion with a battle fought in April 1686; it could not have been given soon after the battle.

But we possess far more, rather absolutely, reliable evidence in favour of the date given above, i. e. April, 1689. According to the Guru's own words (vide *Krishna Avtar*, 2390), the tenth chapter of Bhagwat was completed at Paonta on *Sawan sudi* 7, 1745 Bk., or some time in July 1688. As the Guru returned from Paonta to Anandpur soon after the battle of Bhangani, and did no literary work at Paonta after the battle, the battle must have been fought after *Sawan sudi* 4, 1745 (July, 1688). The date given by Kahan Singh in his *Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature* is Baisakh 18, 1746, or April 16, 1689. Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas* also gives the year 1689 as the year of the battle.

It may be added that when this view was placed before Dr. Ganda Singh, co-author of the above said book, in October 1958, he agreed with this view and wrote that the date given by Kahan Singh 'may be taken as correct'.

But his preparatory work was again interrupted the following year. For some years the hill chiefs had not been paying their yearly tribute into the imperial exchequer at Delhi. In 1690 orders were sent from Delhi to Mian Khan, governor of Jammu, to realize the arrears from the defaulting hill chiefs. They thought it prudent to seek the Guru's advice and help. He advised them to resist the demand; for if they paid it once, more and more would be demanded afterwards. 'Peace at all costs,' said he, 'either leads to demoralization or ends in war. So, pay no tribute to the Turks. Prepare for the fight. I shall be with you.'¹

The hill chiefs did accordingly. The Mughal armies, thereupon, were ordered to proceed against them. The Guru and the hill chiefs met them at Nadaun. The imperial armies suffered a severe defeat. The victory was generally regarded as that of the Guru. It could not but have perturbed the Mughal authorities. The Guru went on adding to his military resources and acquiring more and more strength in men and material.

Aurangzeb had left for the Deccan in 1681 to carry on his campaign against the Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkanda. As he was too busy there, his viceroys in the north do not seem to have sent him any reports about the Guru's activities; or perhaps, he had no time to spare for such reports, and allowed the officials on the spot to take

1. Macauliffe, Vol. V, p. 52.

whatever action they deemed proper in all such matters. The fact is that for pretty long he paid no attention to the Guru and his Sikhs. He left them alone. But the repulse of the imperial armies at Nadaun, and the daily increasing power of the Guru, made it necessary for the governor of Sarhind to bring the matter to the Emperor's notice. It is on record that in November, 1693 Aurangzeb received news from Sarhind that Guru Gobind Singh was declaring himself to be Guru Nanak and was creating trouble.¹ The Emperor issued orders to Faujdars (governors) that the Guru should be admonished and prevented from assembling his Sikhs.²

From this it will appear that after the battle of Nadaun (1690) the Guru was left undisturbed for over three years. When or in what form the above-said admonition was conveyed to the Guru is not clear. But it is recorded, 'This does not seem to have produced much effect. It was soon reported to the Emperor that the Sikhs had caused a good deal of disturbance round Lahore and a general order for massacre was issued.'³

Perhaps as an offshoot of this order, the Guru was attacked once more by a combination of some hill chiefs and the imperial forces. This was in

1. Some details about the troubles being created by the Guru must have figured in the report.

2. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* (R.A.S., London), Vol. I, 1677-1695. Entry dated November 20, 1693.

3. *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*, 15a, quoted by Sharma in *The Religious Policy of the Mughals*, on page 167.

1694-95. The battle of Guler or the Husaini battle, as the Guru calls it in the *Bachittar Natak*, resulted in a decisive victory for the Guru.

The news of these repeated disasters to the imperial armies caused anxiety to the Emperor. He himself was too busy in the Deccan. Therefore, he sent his eldest son, Prince Muazzim, afterwards known as Bahadur Shah, to set right the matters in the Panjab. This was in 1696. The Prince himself took up his position at Lahore. He sent Mirza Beg with a strong force to chastise the Guru and the hill chiefs. The latter were severely punished, but the Guru was left alone. That was owing to the intercession of Bhai Nand Lal, who was a devout Sikh and a secretary to the Prince.

Bhai Nand Lal seems to have brought about some sort of understanding between the Prince and the Guru. On hearing from Bhai Nand Lal about the spiritual greatness and lofty, cosmopolitan principles of the Guru, the Prince became a friend and admirer of the Guru. He arranged matters in such a way that, for the time-being at least, the Guru made up his quarrel with the Mughal government. He advised his followers to render unto Caesar what was due unto him. This is clear from the following words of his in the *Bachittar Natak*:—

‘The House of Baba Nanak and that of Babar
Both derive their authority from God Himself.
Recognize the former as supreme in religion,

And the latter, as supreme in secular affairs.'
(xiii, 9)

This would show, in the first place, that the Guru had no political motives or ambitions. He did not want to exercise control over the secular affairs even of his own Sikhs. He was prepared to recognize the Mughal government's supreme authority in secular affairs even over his own followers, provided that government recognized him as having supreme authority over his followers in religious affairs, that is, if the government agreed to permit full religious freedom to him and his followers. He knew that, if such freedom and authority were guaranteed, he would be able to make his followers so strong that they would be able, ultimately, to put an end to the Mughals' oppressive bigotry and their campaign of forcible conversion. Secondly, it shows that, at that stage at least, the Guru did not want to open hostilities with the Mughal government. He needed time to mature his plans in peace, and to equip his growing community in such a way and to such a degree that it would have no difficulty in vanquishing and liquidating the hated tyrants.

CHAPTER X

Guru Gobind Singh's Battles—I

As a result of rapprochement made between the Guru and the Mughal government through the good offices of Bhai Nand Lal, the Guru got some respite to think and to mature his future plans. The upshot of that prolonged deep thinking and planning was the creation of the Khalsa. On the Baisakhi day of 1756 Bk., March 30, 1699, he called a special meeting of the Sikhs at Anandpur. When all were seated, he drew out his sword and said aloud, 'Is there any one who will lay down his life now at my call?' All present were stunned at the strange demand. The Guru went on repeating his demand. At the third call, Bhai Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore, rose and offered his head. The Guru pulled him into a tent nearby. A blow and a thud were heard, a stream of blood ran out of the tent,

and the Guru, his sword dripping with fresh-drawn blood, came out and called for another head. The call was repeated twice. At this Bhai Dharam Das, a Jat of Delhi, stood in his seat and offered his head. He too, was dragged into the tent. Again, a blow and a thud were heard, a stream of blood flowed out; and the Guru, with his sword dripping with fresh-drawn blood, came out and called for another head. In this way three other men stood up, one after the other, and offered their heads to the Guru. One was Bhai Muhkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka, another was Bhai Sahib Chand, a barber of Bedar, and the third was Bhai Himmat Rai, a *kahar* or water carrier of Jagannath.

The Guru then brought them before the assembly. They were all dressed in saffron, like himself. He called them his Beloved Five. He baptized them with sweetened water which had been stirred with a *khanda* or two-edged sword. After administering baptism to his Beloved Five, he got himself baptized by them. Thousands were baptized afterwards. Over 80,000 were baptized in a few days.

Through his baptism, the Guru poured his life and spirit into his Sikhs and invested them with his own personality. A draught of Nectar transformed the Sikhs, body and mind. The whole community of Sikhs was electrified. A tremendous change was effected in the whole tone of their character. Sweepers, washermen, barbers, and confectioners, who had never even touched the

sword, “became leaders of armies before whom the Rajas quailed and the Nawabs cowered with terror”. They were all ever ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru. ‘If,’ says Sarkar, ‘Cromwell’s Ironsides could have been inspired with the Jesuits’ unquestioning acceptance of their Superior’s decision on moral and spiritual questions, the result would have equalled Guru Gobind Singh’s Sikhs as a fighting machine.’¹ It was the Guru’s type of the future, universal man of God, brave and fearless as a lion, sweet as a woman, holy and pious as a saint, brother of all, striking fear in none, and himself afraid of none. Every day brought an addition of thousands to the ranks of the Khalsa, and increased mightily their religious fervour, martial zest, and proficiency in military skill! and the art of war.

The Guru invited the hill chiefs to take his *Amrit*, join the Khalsa, be their leaders, and put an end to the tyrants’ rule. But they refused. Rather, they got alarmed at the Guru’s innovations and new activities. They saw in them a threat to their power and privileges, as well as to their ancient religion. Hence they vowed ceaseless, uncompromising opposition. A group of them attacked the Guru unawares, one day, but suffered an ignominious defeat. Finding themselves to be no match for the Guru and his new-born Khalsa, they decided, it seems, to make a representation to the Mughal government of Delhi in their capacity as its subjects

1. *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p. 167.

and tributaries ; and to ask for help against the Guru.

In this representation they traced the Guru's history, narrated their encounters with him, giving the narrative a colouring of their own, of course, and added, 'After his return to Anandpur (from Paonta), the Guru established a new sect distinct from the Hindus and Muhammadans, to which he hath given the name of Khalsa. He hath united the four castes into one, and made many followers. He invited us to join him, and promised, if we consented, that we should obtain empire in this world and salvation in the next. He suggested to us that if we rose in rebellion against the Emperor, he would assist us with all his forces, because the Emperor had killed his father, and he desired to avenge his death. As we did not think it proper to oppose the Emperor, the Guru is displeased with us, and now giveth us every form of annoyance. We cannot restrain him, and have accordingly come to crave the protection of this just government against him. If the government consider us its subjects, we pray for its assistance to expel the Guru from Anandpur. Should you delay to punish or restrain him, his next expedition will be against the capital of your empire.'¹

As the Emperor was then in the Deccan, the representation was received by the viceroy of Delhi and forwarded to the Emperor for orders.

1. Macauliffe. Vol. V, pp. 121-122.

In due time the orders of the supreme government were received on the hill chiefs' representation. They were to the effect that an army would be sent to assist them against the Guru, if they met all its expenses, but not otherwise. They at once sent the necessary funds and again prayed that they had no hope except in the Emperor's assistance. An army ten thousand strong was sent from Delhi under Generals Din Beg and Paimda Khan. The hill chiefs joined it with their own forces. In the battle that ensued Paimda Khan was slain and Din Beg was severely wounded. At this the allied armies fled from the field.¹

This victory, naturally, elated the new-born Khalsa and spurred them to still greater preparations. On the other hand, the hill chiefs were sorely dejected. They soon held a council to consider what to do. The daily increasing strength of the Khalsa was an ever-growing mortal danger to their privileges and power. The danger had to be removed. A proposal to send another representation to the Emperor was mooted and dropped. It was decided that they should all make a concerted, all-out attack on the Guru and expel him from Anandpur. They did attack him with all their might, but suffered a severe defeat.

Notwithstanding the disastrous defeats, the hill chiefs were determined to allow no respite or repose to the Guru. They sent envoys to the viceroys of

1. Macauliffe, pp. 124-129.

Delhi and Sarhind to explain that 'the Guru would not suffer His Majesty's loyal, unoffending subjects to abide in peace'. They prayed for really effective help from the Emperor. The viceroys, it is said, thereupon, sent a joint representation against the Guru to the Emperor in the Deccan. The Emperor felt that the Sikhs were becoming a formidable power. They must be crushed before it was too late. Hence he issued orders to Wazir Khan, viceroy of Sarhind, to proceed against the Guru and expel him from Anandpur.¹

Wazir Khan's army proceeded in due time against the Guru. As usual, it was joined by the hill chiefs and their troops. In the action that followed, the Guru was forced to leave Anandpur. The allied armies dispersed soon after having succeeded in expelling the Guru from Anandpur. Some time after that, the Guru returned to Anandpur and got busy again in his work of adding to the strength of the Khalsa and preparing the people for ultimate emancipation from the tyrants' yoke.²

The hill chiefs felt desperate. The Guru's daily increasing strength and popularity posed a growing menace for them. They must get rid of it. Hence they again made a combined attack on the Guru, but were defeated once more.

This defeat came as a severe blow. But they would not think of making their peace with the

1. Macauliffe, Vol. V, pp. 137, 139.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Guru and co-operating with him in the cause of the country's liberation. Their selfish ambitions made them insensible to such noble sentiments. They sent another (their third) representation to Emperor Aurangzeb praying for help against the Guru. They represented that while they were the subjects of His Majesty, the Guru was a common foe of themselves and the Mughals. They added that they would give the Emperor large tribute as the price of his assistance and protection.

CHAPTER XI

Guru Gobind Singh's Battles-II

On receiving this representation along with the viceroy of Delhi's report, the Emperor concluded that the Guru and his Sikhs must be subdued, or they would soon become too great a danger to the Mughal rule. So he ordered a strong army to be sent against the Guru under General Saiyad Khan. As usual, the hill chiefs joined him with their armies.

General Saiyad Khan proceeded to attack the Guru. He was amazed to find many Muslims, like Maimun Khan and Saiyad Beg, in the Guru's army. On beholding the Guru, Saiyad Khan was won over by his magnetic personality. He laid down his arms¹ and left the field.² How could he

1. Macauliffe, Vol. V, p. 156.

2. *Ibid*, p. 163.

fight against that soldier of God ? The command of the imperial army was taken over by General Ramzan Khan. Under him, the imperial army fought with great bravery and determination. In spite of the gallant fight put up by the Sikhs, they could not hold their own against the very heavy odds facing them. The Guru had to evacuate Anandpur. The imperial army entered and plundered the city and then leisurely proceeded towards Sarhind. The Sikhs, who were smarting under their reverses, fell upon and routed the imperial army.¹

The Emperor felt much annoyed on hearing of his army's defeat. He expressed his determination to finish up with the Guru and his Sikhs. But at the Court Qazi's advice, he invited the Guru to his Court for a heart-to-heart talk. The Guru replied that as the Emperor persisted in his policy of bigoted persecution of Sikhs and Hindus, a meeting between them could serve no useful purpose.

The hill chiefs, on their part, were in greater despair now. They could think of no way to put an end to the danger posed to them by the Guru's increasing power, except with the help of the imperial armies. They were of the opinion that the imperial armies sent against the Guru in the past had not been sufficiently strong. They decided to make a direct representation to the Emperor, instead of sending it through the viceroy of Sarhind or Delhi. Says G.C. Narang, "The Rajas were now helpless

1. Macauliffe, p. 164.

and began to despair of themselves. They prepared a memorial and sent it to the Emperor, stating in most abject and piteous terms that the Guru had adopted the royal insignia and called himself the true king, that thousands of fanatical followers were daily flocking to his flag, that they themselves had failed to break his power, and that, elated with victory, he was daily growing more insolent and dangerous, that he defied the authority of his Imperial Majesty and was encouraging his ignorant followers by holding forth to them the hopes that time was coming when His Majesty's Government would fall to the dust and the Khalsa would be the supreme ruler in the land."¹ They ended by saying that the Guru wanted them to embrace his new religion and join him in waging war against the Emperor.

The oft-repeated representations of the hill chiefs and the reports which he received from his own officials, from time to time, at last led the Emperor to the conclusion that a determined, all-out effort must be made to subdue the Guru and to suppress the movement led by him. He feared that the Guru was becoming too powerful. He was also displeased at the state of unrest prevailing in the Panjab. Therefore, he ordered his viceroys of Delhi, Sarhind, and Lahore to despatch all available troops against the Guru. The hill chiefs who had complained were also to assist in repressing the 'common enemy'.

The Emperor's orders were conveyed to the

1. *Transformation of Sikhism*, third edition, pp. 150-151.

viceroy of Delhi, in view of the safety of the empire's capital, was not in a position to spare any troops for the expedition against the Guru. The viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore, however, ordered all their available troops to march towards Anandpur. Together they formed a formidable array, indeed. All the hill chiefs, about two dozen of them, came to assist them with all their forces.¹ The Muhammadan Ranghars and Gujjars of the *ilaqa* joined them in large numbers.

The combined forces proceeded to attack the Guru. "The Guru summoned all his resources and came out to meet the Imperial army. A great battle was fought at Kiritpur in 1701 A.D. The Guru's troops behaved like heroes and fought most desperately, but they were fighting against fearful odds. After two days of desperate fighting, the Sikhs were driven back, and the Guru had to take refuge in the fort of Anandpur where he shut himself up. The Imperial army laid siege to the fort and cut off all communications from without."²

The warfare that ensued lasted for more than four years.³ The Sikhs were put to very severe hard-

1. According to Sikh accounts and tradition, the number of the Rajas was twenty-two. Narang writes, "Buti Shah says that 22 Rajas joined the Governors of Sarhind and Lahore in attacking the Guru". *op. cit.*, p. 151, footnote.

2. Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

3. See *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 72. Some may feel inclined to believe that the fort of Anandpur could not have stood such a long siege. They are requested to remember that the siege of the Maratha fort, Jinji, conducted under Aurangzeb's direct orders and supervision, began in 1691 A.D. and ended in 1698. That is, the fort stood the siege for seven years.

ships on account of thirst and hunger. But they held on bravely. The attackers began to fear that, in spite of their superior strength, they might fail in taking Anandpur. At that juncture they decided to play a trick. The hill chiefs and the Imperial generals sent a joint message to the Guru asking him to evacuate the fort even though for a short time. That would give them a semblance of victory. They swore on the cow and the Quran that if the Guru evacuated, he would not be molested or harmed in any way whatsoever.¹

The Guru had no faith in these oaths of theirs. He was convinced that they were mere tricks designed to deceive him. He refused to fall into their trap. However, his Sikhs, who were suffering terribly under the hardships of the prolonged siege, were in favour of accepting the offer. But the Guru exhorted them not to give in or be taken in, but to hold on a little longer.

After some time came an autograph letter from Aurangzeb himself. In it he promised on the Quran that the Guru and his party would not be molested

1. That the hill chiefs were in the habit of employing such tricks will be evident from the following :—

Kulu was invaded by the Sikhs in 1839. The raja was captured. Then a rescue was attempted and effected. The Sikhs were ambushed. "Escape being impossible, the Sikhs were in great straits, and the hillmen resorted to treachery to effect a surrender. Four or five low caste men, dressed as Brahmans, were sent into the Sikh camp, who, with their hands on a cow's tail, gave assurances of safety. Such a promise was not regarded as binding, and on their surrender, the Sikhs were massacred to a man."

(J. Hutchinson and Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, pp. 85-6)

or harmed if they evacuated the fort. The long-suffering, famished Sikhs again renewed their entreaties. They even prevailed upon his mother to plead for them. He was pressed to accept the Emperor's oath and offer. But the Guru was still firm. He advised his Sikhs to hold on, and not to be taken in by the Emperor's oaths; they were sure to be broken. But the Sikhs went on repeating their requests.

At last the Guru said, "All right. Let us test the oaths." He sent word to the besiegers that he would evacuate if they would first allow the removal of his property. They agreed. Under the Guru's orders all sorts of rubbish was packed in sacks which were loaded on bullocks. Each sack was covered with a piece of brocade. The bullocks were led out at midnight. As soon as the bullocks went out, the besiegers fell upon them in order to plunder the Guru's 'valuable property'. This proved how treacherous and false the hill chiefs and the Mughals were, how unworthy of reliance their oaths and assurances could prove.¹

For a time the Sikhs took courage and held on most heroically. But forced by the hardships of the long siege, some of them left the Guru after signing a *bedawa* or 'disclaimer'—a formal declaration that he was not their Guru and they were not his Sikhs.

1. The plundering of the bullocks, as well as the Emperor's *written promise* and oath, is mentioned in the *Zafarnama*, and thus, corroborated by the Guru himself; for he writes, "Thou art bound by thy oath on the Qur n...I would have gone many times to thee had thy written promise been kept when the bullocks were plundered."

CHAPTER XII

Evacuation of Anandpur and After

As said above, the besiegers several times assured the Guru, on most solemn oaths, that no harm would be done to him and his party if they evacuated the fort and left the city. These oaths and assurances of theirs were later supplemented and confirmed by Aurangzeb in an autograph letter addressed to the Guru. At last the untold sufferings of his Khalsa and the solemn assurances of the enemies moved the Guru to evacuate the fort and leave the city; though in his heart of hearts he had no faith in those oaths and assurances. He evacuated the city on December 20, 1704.¹

1. This, i.e., December 20, 1704, is the generally accepted date of the evacuation of Anandpur, but according to Kesar Singh Chhibbar, Rattan Singh Bhangu, Ganesha Singh, and Bhat Vahis, the date is December 5, 1705.

' (Contd. on next page)

As soon, however, as he came out, the allied armies, casting to the winds their solemn oaths on the cow and the Quran, fell upon him near the Sarsa stream. Fierce fighting followed in the darkness and the rain. When the day dawned on the site of the slaughter, the Guru was found still calm and unperturbed. He held the morning *diwan* or religious service just as usual. In the midst of the booming of guns and the hissing of arrows, the Guru sang the praises of God and prayed for the good of all. In the ensuing confusion, the Guru's luggage, including some very precious manuscripts, was washed away in the waves of the fast-flowing flooded Sarsa. At the same time, the Guru was separated from a part of his family. Along with his two elder sons—Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh—and a band of forty trusty Sikhs, he was able to reach Chamkaur in the district of Ambala. That was on December 21, 1704.

His wife, Mata Sundri, mother of his four sons, and his virgin wife, Mata Sihib Kaur, mother of the Khalsa, passed a night at Ropar in the house

(Contd. from previous page)

It has, however, to be noted that the generally accepted dates of events connected with the subsequent life of the Guru are all in conformity with the first of these dates :

Reaching Chamkaur Sahib	... December 21, 1704
Martyrdom of two elder sons	... December 22, 1704
Martyrdom of two younger sons	... December 27, 1704
Battle of Muktsar	... May 1705

If December 5, 1705 be taken as the date of the evacuation of Anandpur, all these dates will have to be changed. The above named authors do not give any dates for the events mentioned above. Why not accept the generally accepted date, therefore ?

of a devoted Sikh. On the morrow they left for Delhi accompanied by a trusty Sikh.

His two younger sons—Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh—and his mother, Mata Gujri, took shelter with a Brahman who was an ex-servant of theirs. His name was Gangu. That mean fellow betrayed them to the nearest Mughal official at Morinda. The latter arrested them and sent them on to Wazir Khan, governor of Sarhind. Wazir Khan imprisoned them in a tower. This happened on December 24, 1704.

With threats of torture and death, on the one hand, and allurements of rank, wealth and pleasure, on the other, Wazir Khan tried to make the two little children embrace Islam. But they refused to yield. Under his orders, backed by the Court qazis, they were tortured, bricked up alive, and then beheaded on December 27, 1704. On hearing the news of her grandsons' martyrdom, Mata Gujri blessed them, thanked God for His having granted them the strength to die for their faith, and followed them to the Eternal Home.¹

The imperial armies in their thousands pursued the Guru to Chamkaur. On reaching there, he occupied a mud-house belonging to a Jat. It was located on an eminence and had the form of a fortress. The Mughal armies arrived soon there-

1. The arrest and subsequent treatment of the Guru's tender-aged sons and aged mother would show that his whole family had been outlawed by the Mughal government. These three had committed no offence.

after, surrounded the village, and launched a series of attacks on the mud-walled 'fortress'. Under orders from Aurangzeb himself artillery from Sarhind was also brought up for the attack.¹ The Sikhs faced the repeated attacks of the imperial army with wonderful courage and endurance. The Guru's two sons, aged eighteen and fourteen, and three of his Beloved Five—Bhais Sahib Singh, Muhkam Singh, and Himmat Singh—laid down their lives while fighting against the imperial hordes. Out of the forty Sikhs who had accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur only eight were left with him. They persuaded the Guru to go away and save himself. Three Sikhs, Bhais Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, and Man Singh, were chosen to accompany him. All this happened on December 22, 1704. The five Sikhs who stayed on in the 'fortress' kept on the fight with unabated courage and determination. They were at last overpowered and killed by the imperial hordes.

On learning that the Guru had escaped, Wazir Khan gave orders to his army that the Guru be pursued relentlessly and taken alive or dead. After

1. 'The battle of Chamkaur between the Sikhs and the imperialists is spoken of in one of Aurangzeb's letters when artillery from Sarhind was mobilized for the imperial attack.' (*Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*, 55b, 56a, quoted by Sharma in his *The Religious Policy of the Mughals*). Here is another instance to prove that Aurangzeb's oaths on the Quran, guaranteeing safe exit to the Guru and his party, were never intended to be kept. That he did take such oaths and broke them is borne out by the Guru's *Zafarnama*. In attacking the Guru on his evacuating Anandpur, pursuing him to Chamkaur, and launching the attack there, the imperial armies were obeying the orders of Aurangzeb himself. Such was Aurangzeb ! Such were his oaths on the Quran !

great hardships and many hair-breadth escapes, helped and served by his Sikh and Muslim devotees, the Guru reached Dina. It was while staying at Dina that the Guru wrote his famous letter to Aurangzeb, known as *Zafarnama* or the *Epistle of Victory*. We shall deal with it later.

From Dina, the Guru marched on and reached in the vicinity of the place now called Muktsar. News was brought to him that Wazir Khan's forces were pursuing him and were about to close on him. He collected his men and turned on his pursuers. The forty Majha Sikhs who, among others, had deserted the Guru at Anandpur, and who had later repented of their weakness, had come back, determined to lay down their lives for him. They pitched themselves between the imperial army and the Guru. Their object was to give the Guru time to prepare for the coming encounter. The Mughal army came up soon after. At the site of the place since called *Muktsar* or the *Pool of Salvation*, the Guru fought his last battle against the Mughal forces, on May 8, 1705. 'The fighting was as hard as before, but this time the royal forces were defeated.'¹ Among his own slain the Guru found those forty men of Majha. He was greatly moved at the sight of them. At the request of their leader, Bhai

1. Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 75. See also Latif and Macgregor. These two writers say that the Guru's army was 12,000 strong and the Mughal army, 7,000. Actually, the Guru's army was much smaller than the Mughal army; but its astonishing success against the royal army, probably, induced these writers to conjecture that it outnumbered the Mughal army.

Mahan Singh, who though mortally wounded, was yet alive, the Guru tore the 'disclaimer' which they had signed. Pleased with their sacrifice, the Guru called them *Muktas* or the *Saved Ones*. In their honour the place was named Muktsar.

After this defeat, Wazir Khan gave up pursuing or molesting the Guru. The Emperor himself was too busy then in his prolonged war against the Marathas, who were offering stubborn resistance. He was, also, old and infirm, and was nearing his last illness. He had no time or thought to spare for happenings in the Panjab. Moreover, the Guru had been forced out of Anandpur and was a fugitive. He sensed no further trouble or danger from him. Rather, as we shall see, he now thought of making amends for the wrongs done to the Guru and seeking solace in his company.

CHAPTER XIII

Correspondence between the Guru and Aurangzeb—I

From 1681 to his death in 1707, Aurangzeb stayed in the Deccan, engaged in a long and unprofitable struggle with the Muslim powers of Bijapur and Golkanda and with the Marathas. Consequently, the hill chiefs' representations and the viceroy of Sarhind's reports against Guru Gobind Singh had all been sent to him there for orders. As a result of these, the Emperor took two-fold action. He issued orders to his viceroys to proceed against the Guru. Secondly, so goes the tradition, he sent to the Guru three letters, one of them being an autograph one. The Guru replied to each of them. Let us see what they wrote to each other.

As we have seen, in response to the hill-chiefs'

representation, the Emperor ordered a large army under Saiyad Khan to proceed against the Guru. When Aurangzeb heard of the fate of his army, he was very much upset and angry. He called for an explanation from his fugitive soldiers. The answer which he got represented the Guru to be kind and strong, 'in war equal to one thousand men'. The Emperor burst out angrily that the Guru must be crushed; for he was becoming too dangerous for the State. The Court Qazi, however, advised that the Guru should be brought to the Emperor's presence by some stratagem. Accordingly, Aurangzeb sent the Guru a letter with the following message :—

'There is only one Emperor. Thy religion and mine are the same.¹ Come to me, by all means, otherwise I shall be angry and go to thee. If thou come, thou shalt be treated as holy men are treated by monarchs. I have obtained this sovereignty from God. Be well advised, and thwart not my wishes.'²

The envoy, a qazi, who brought this letter gave oral assurances to the Guru that the Emperor was all sincerity and would keep his promise, in letter and spirit.³

The Guru replied that he did not want any

1. Like Islam, Sikhism preaches unity of God, forbids worship of idols, and rejects the theory of divine incarnation.

2. Macauliffe, V., p. 165. That the Emperor did write such a letter, promising to come to the Guru if the latter would not go to him, is borne out by the Guru's *Zafarnama*, vide Chapter XV, section, (3) of this book.

3. That the qazi gave oral assurances to the Guru is borne out by the *Zafarnama*, vide Chapter XV, section (3) of this book.

political alliance. He had no political ambitions. His fight was against tyranny and oppression. As long as Aurangzeb persisted in his religious policy of bigoted persecution, the Guru could not hold any talks or parleys or think of being on good terms with him. A meeting between them could be of some use only if the Emperor agreed to give up that policy. The Guru knew quite well how non-Muslim 'holy men' had been treated by that 'monarch' and his subordinates. He would not trust him or fall into his trap. Accordingly, he sent him the following reply:—

“My brother, the Sovereign who hath made thee emperor hath sent me into the world to do justice. He hath commissioned thee also to do justice, but thou hast forgotten His mandate and practisest hypocrisy. Wherefore how can I be on good terms with thee who pursuest the Hindus with blind hatred? Thou recognizest not that the people belong to God and not to the emperor, and yet thou seekest to destroy their religion”. When despatching this reply to the emperor, the Guru conferred a robe of honour on his envoy.¹

It will be seen that the Guru's reply contains a bit of plain speaking, calling a spade a spade; yet its tone is sober and dignified, without any trace of anger or ill-will. He even addresses the Emperor, the murderer of his father, as 'my brother', and confers a robe of honour on his envoy. Such was the Guru's heart, full of charity and love for all, free

1. Macauliffe, V., p. 165.

from even the faintest tinge of hatred against even his sworn enemies. The reply shows further that the Guru's opposition to the Emperor was not based on any personal considerations or motives, or inspired by any sense of the wrongs done to him and his family. He had no ill-feeling against Aurangzeb. His fight was against the tyranny and oppression to which the Hindus were being subjected under the Mughal Emperor's rule; like his father, he championed the cause of the oppressed, down-trodden Hindus, as much as he championed the cause of his own followers.

Aurangzeb's second letter, an autograph one, was received during the protracted siege of Anandpur. It was some time after the loot of the Guru's oxen carrying rubbish that the Emperor's autograph letter was received in the middle of 1704. In that letter he wrote with his own hand :

“I have sworn on the Quran not to harm thee. If I do, may I not find a place in God's court hereafter.¹ Cease warfare and come to me. If thou desire not to come hither, then go whithersoever thou pleasest.”²

‘The Emperor's envoy added, on his own

1. Aurangzeb's mind, it seems, was reverting to this oath of his and its subsequent breach when, feeling his end to be near, he wrote to his son, Prince Azim, ‘I fear for my salvation, and dread the torments with which I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounties of God, yet, regarding my actions, fear will not quit me.’

(Edwardes and Garret, p. 155)

2. This shows that what the Emperor wanted was that the Guru should evacuate Anandpur and then either go to see him in the Deccan, or go anywhere else according to his pleasure. He would not be molested or harmed in either case.

account, "O Guru, all who go to the Emperor's court praise thee. On that account the Emperor feeleth certain that an interview with you will add to his happiness.¹ He has sworn by Muhammad and called God to witness that he will not harm thee. The hill rajas have also sworn by the cow and called their idoīs to witness, that they will allow thee safe conduct. Bear not in mind anything that hath occurred. The attack on thine oxen was not prompted by any raja. The attackers have been generally punished, and the ringleaders are in prison. No one now, O True Guru, dareth do thee any harm ; wherefore evacuate the fort, at any rate for the present, and come with me to the Emperor. Thou mayest afterwards do what thou pleasest."²

It should be noted that, according to the amplification of the Emperor's letter by his own envoy, the Emperor wanted the Guru to 'evacuate the fort for the present'. He was not being asked to evacuate the city of Anandpur. If the oaths and promises had been sincere and meant to be kept, he could have come out of the fort and stayed at Anandpur, and might have, after some time, re-occupied the fort itself.³

1. As will be seen later, Aurangzeb was at that time in great need of consolation and happiness. Whose company and words could supply that need better than the occupant of Guru Nanak's *gaddi* ? Who could do it better than the Guru who was praised by all who visited the Emperor's court, and who had proved his godliness by his actual deeds ?

2. Macauliffe, Vol. v, p. 179.

3. No doubt the Guru was alluding to this assurance from the Emperor when he wrote the following words in his *Zafarnama* :—

'Had I been able to repose confidence in thine oath on the Quran, I would not have abandoned my city.'

But the Guru would not trust the Emperor, whom, in his previous letter, he had accused of practising hypocrisy, and whom in his *Zafarnama* he was to call 'crafty and deceitful as a fox'. Hence he told the envoy that he had lost all faith in the oaths and promises of the 'Turks' and the hill-men. He added, 'You are all liars, and therefore all your empire and your glory shall depart. You all took oaths before this and then perjured yourselves. Your troops, whose business it was to fight, have become robbers, and therefore, you shall all be damned.'¹

1. Macauliffe, Vol. V, p. 179.

CHAPTER XIV

Correspondence between the Guru and the Emperor—II

Aurangzeb's third letter was received by the Guru when he was staying at Dina. It was received some time before his victory of Muktsar, probably in March, 1705.

In this connexion it will be helpful and instructive to bear in mind Aurangzeb's condition at the time of writing his second and third letters to the Guru. From 1700 onwards he was personally directing operations against the Marathas, who were offering unexpectedly stubborn resistance. 'The imperial army at first succeeded in capturing about half-a-dozen forts of the outer line of the Maratha defences, but behind them lay many others equally strong and more inaccessible. Moreover, what the

Mughals won one day was regained the next day by the Marathas, so that the war was protracted interminably. Famine, pestilence, and flood caused havoc in the Mughal army, and the “very elements seemed to combine against the Mughals”. Speaking of one flood in the Bhima river where the royal camp was pitched, Khafi Khan says, “The waters began to overflow at midnight when all the world was asleep....The flood carried off about ten to twelve thousand men, with establishments of the King and the princes and the *amirs*, horses, bullocks, and cattle in countless numbers, tents and furniture beyond all count....Great fear fell on the army....The King wrote out prayers with his own hand, and ordered them to be thrown into the water, for the purpose of causing it to subside.”¹ But these suppliant charms were ineffectual to arrest the course of nature as his arms to stem the human tide of war which he had provoked and which, Providence had decreed, was to submerge the empire.”²

Such was the situation in which Aurangzeb found himself at that time. He had, also, no doubt, heard of the happenings in the Panjab and of the excesses committed under his orders by his viceroys against the Guru, his sons, and his Sikhs. The tale of the Guru’s hardships and bereavements must have made some impression on his mind, heart, and conscience—all three of which had been

1. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. vii, p. 361.

2. Edwardes and Garret, *op. cit.*, 153.

shaken to their depths by the reverses and calamities referred to above. He felt that these reverses and calamities indicated as if God had forsaken him, as if his empire and glory had been doomed. This could not but have brought back to his mind his own oaths and promises to the Guru, his own subsequent violations thereof, and the Guru's replies to his letters. 'I have sworn on the Quran,' he had written to the Guru, 'not to harm thee. If I do, may I not find a place in God's court hereafter.' He had later broken that most solemn oath. What would God do to him for that perjury? The Guru had replied, 'You have forgotten His mandate....You are all liars and therefore your empire and glory shall depart....You shall all be damned.'

Being a deeply religious man himself, Aurangzeb could not have failed to feel that God's wrath was already visiting him, that the Guru's curses were taking effect. He had heard a great deal about the Guru's piety and saintliness, his love for God and man, his great spiritual powers. His own ancestor Babar had sought Guru Nanak's blessings. He had obtained them after assuring the Guru that he would be a just and merciful ruler and steer clear of religious bigotry. Aurangzeb must have said to himself, 'I have failed to live up to those assurances. Guru Gobind Singh occupies Guru Nanak's *gaddi*. He is Guru Nanak himself. It is time I should meet him and make peace with him by making amends for the wrongs done to him.'

Under some such impulse it was that he

wrote his third letter to the Guru. Because of his military pre-occupation, he could not himself go to the Guru or to some place near him, as Akbar had done in his time. Hence he invited the Guru once again, so that they might have heart-to-heart talks, come to some understanding, and end the strife; so that he himself might derive consolation and solace from communion with that holy man of God. In this invitation also he assured the Guru that no harm would be done to him.

As said above, this letter was received by the Guru when he was staying at Dina. He had reached there after many hardships and hair-breadth escapes. Now he had a bit of respite. He decided to send a full and comprehensive reply to the Emperor. The letter which he wrote was in Persian verse. The tone of the whole letter was in keeping with its title—*Zafarnama* or the *Epistle of Victory*. The Guru felt that, notwithstanding his reverses and losses, he had gained real victory over the Emperor. He had not abandoned any of his principles; he had been true to the teachings of his religion, in peace as well as in war, with friends as well as with those who chose to be his foes; he had not forgotten nor broken any mandate of God. But the Emperor had broken his most solemn oaths, not once but often. The Guru was determined to see that Aurangzeb should be told all this; he should be made to feel the great wrongs which he had done or had ordered to be done, in violation of his oaths on the Quran. He must be told that he had

exhibited ignorance of religion, lack of religious spirit, disregard for God and the Prophet.

Perhaps this might shake up his conscience, soften his heart, and disabuse his mind of cruel, crafty designs against his Hindu and Sikh subjects. Perhaps this might make him abandon his policy of bigoted persecution and turn him into a kind and merciful ruler.

The title, tone, language, and contents of the letter are not those of a representation. It was not at all a representation, though writers like Latif give it that name. The whole reads like a rebuke addressed by a superior personality to one on a lower plane.¹ 'Come to me,' says the Guru in one place, 'that we may speak to each other and that I may utter kind words to thee.' Yes, such was Guru Gobind Singh's spiritual, godly height, so magnanimous was his heart. Even after all that he had borne at the hands and under the orders of Aurangzeb, he wanted to utter kind words to him, because the latter needed them very much just then. We shall examine the contents of the letter—*Zafarnama*—in the next chapter.

1. In this letter, says Cunningham, the Guru 'remonstrates rather than humbles himself. He denounces the wrath of God on the monarch, rather than deprecates the imperial anger against himself; he tells the Emperor that he puts no trust in him and that the Khalsa will avenge him.' (Page 80)

CHAPTER XV

The Zafarnama

(1)

In his last letter, as of course in his previous ones, Aurangzeb had invited the Guru and had sworn on the Quran that no harm would be done to him, if he should come. Regarding this the Guru says :—

‘I have no faith in thine oath to which thou takest God as witness.

I have no particle of confidence in thee.

He who putteth faith in thine oath on the Quran is thereby a ruined man.

Wert thou to take a hundred oaths on the Quran, I would not even then trust thee in the slightest.

I would have gone many times to thee had thy promise been kept when the bullocks were plundered.

As thou didst forget thy word on that day, so will God forget thee.

God will grant thee the fruit of the evil deed thou didst design.

When thou didst swear by Muhammad and called the word of God to witness,

It was incumbent on thee to observe that oath.

Were the Prophet himself present here, I would make it my specific object to inform him of thy treachery.

Hadst thou sworn a hundred times on the Quran, I would not have trusted thee in the slightest even for a moment.

(2)

As for the Emperor's invitation to see him, the Guru, after telling him that he has no confidence in him and his oaths, writes :—

‘I will not enter thy presence, nor travel on the same road with thee ;

But if God so will it, I will proceed towards thee’.

Here the Guru clearly hints at the possibility of, and his readiness for, his meeting the Emperor on a field of battle.

(3)

In a previous letter Aurangzeb had said, ‘Come to see me ; otherwise I shall be angry and go to

thee.' The Guru, after firmly refusing to go to the Emperor, reminds him of this promise, asks him to keep it, and says :—

‘Hadst thou any intention of keeping thy oath,
Thou shouldst have girded up thy loins and
come to me.

Do what is incumbent on thee and adhere to
thy written promise.

Thou shouldst have cheerfully fulfilled it and
also the oral promises of thy envoy.

Thou didst promise to abide by the word of
thy qazi.

If thou hast spoken truly, then come to me.

If thou desire to seal thy promise on the
Quran, I will gladly send it to thee for the
purpose.

If thou come to the village of Kangar, we
shall have an interview.

Thou shalt not run the slightest danger on
the way, for the whole tribe of Bairars are
under me.

Come to me that we may speak to each other,
and that I may utter kind words to thee.

(4)

As we have noted already, the Emperor's envoy, a qazi, had assured the Guru that what the Emperor wanted was that the Guru should evacuate the fort. He could stay in Anandpur or go anywhere else. If the Guru had trusted these oaths and assurances, he would have evacuated the fort and stayed at Anandpur. We can well imagine

what the consequences would have been. Concerning this the Guru writes :—

‘Had I been able to repose confidence in thy oath on the Quran, I would not have abandoned my city.

Had I not known that thou wert crafty and deceitful as a fox, I would never on that account have come hither.’

(5)

Referring to the attack made on him at Chamkaur, the Guru says :—

‘He who cometh to me and sweareth on the Quran, ought not to try to kill or capture me.

As to my defeat at Chamkaur, what could famished forty men do when a hundred thousand came on them unawares ?

The oath-breakers attacked them abruptly with swords, arrows, and muskets.

I was constrained to engage in combat, and fight to the utmost of my ability.

Thine army came clothed like blue-bottles, and all of a sudden charged with a loud shout.

Every soldier of thine who advanced beyond his defences to attack my position, fell deluged in blood.

Thy troops who committed no aggression
received no injury at our hands.¹

My men, the bravest of the brave, fought like
mad men ;

But how could forty even of the bravest
succeed when opposed by a countless
host ?'

(6)

The Guru then rebukes the Emperor for his
having acted against the teachings of the Prophet
and the mandates of God. He invokes the wrath
of God on him for his perjury. He says :—

‘Did I not know that thou, O faithless man,
wert worshipper of wealth, and perjurer ?

Thou keepest no faith and observest no
religion.

Thou knowest not God, and believest not in
Muhammad.

He who hath regard for his religion never
swerveth from his promise.

Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the
Quran is, and canst have no belief in
Divine Providence.

It is good to act according to thy religion, and
to know that God is dearer than life.

1. Note the Guru's lofty code of warfare, his code for dealing with even such enemies as had broken their oaths and attacked him unawares. Though they were all there to attack and fight against him, yet he, on his side, struck only those who actually came out to attack him. Those taking rest or not actually engaged in attacks, were not molested. On the other side, we find the Mughals murdering even innocent, unoffending, tender-aged children.

I do not deem thou knowest God, since thou hast done acts of oppression.

Wherefore the great God knoweth thee not and will not receive thee with all thy wealth.'

(7)

The Emperor claimed to be, and prided himself on his being, deeply and sincerely religious. But the Guru tells him that this claim of his is unfounded. He says :—

“Fortunate art thou Aurangzeb, king of kings, expert swordsman and rider.

Handsome is thy person, intelligent art thou. Emperor and ruler of the country, thou art clever to administer thy kingdom, and skilled to wield the sword.

Thou art generous to thy coreligionists, and prompt to crush thy enemies.

Thy generosity is profuse and in battle thou art firm as a mountain.

Thou art king of kings, and ornament of the thrones of the world.

Thou art monarch of the world,

But far from thee is religion.

Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion.

(8)

The Guru then emphasises the duty to keep one's word. He says :—

Everybody ought to be a man of his word,

And not utter one thing while he contemplateth another.

Promises not meant to be fulfilled injure those who make them.

He who hath regard for his religion swerveth not from his promise.'

(9)

The Guru then reminds Aurangzeb that in oppressing his subjects he was acting against God's behests. He then calls the wrath of God on him for his bigotry and perjury. He says:—

“It is thy duty to know God.

He never ordered thee to annoy others.

Thou art seated on an emperor's throne, yet how strange are thy justice, thine attributes, and thy regard for religion.

Smite not any one mercilessly with the sword, Or a sword from on high shall smite thee thyself.

O man, be not reckless, fear God. He is the Protector of the miserable and Destroyer of the reckless.

Be not heedless; this *caravansarai* is only for a few days.

Even though thou art strong, annoy not the weak.

Lay not the axe to thy kingdom.

Remember, adds the Guru :

‘The Merciful showeth mercy on him who acteth honestly.

God bestoweth peace on him who heartily
performeth His service.

He rescueth the helpless and protecteth them
from injury.'

(10)

The Guru then exhorts the Emperor to act up
to his promise, settle the disputes and differences
with him, and make amends for the past. He
says :—

'If thou have any belief in God, delay not in
this matter.

Thou art bound by thine oath on the Quran,
Bring the matter to a good issue according to
thy promise.

It is incumbent on thee to act wisely and be
discreet in all thine actions.'

(11)

The Guru explains the cause of the hill chiefs'
opposition to him and his conflict with them. He
says :—

'I wanted to vanquish the hill chiefs who were
full of strife.

They worshipped idols and I was an idol
breaker.'

(12)

The Guru assures the Emperor that he did not
want to engage in fights, but to work in peace; all
the same, peace at costs was not his motto. He

says.

‘I was constrained to engage in combat,
And I fought to the utmost of my ability.
When an affair passeth beyond the region of
diplomacy,
When all other remedies have been tried and
found ineffective,
It is lawful to have recourse to the sword.’

(13)

Referring to the death of his four sons, the
Guru says,
‘What though my four sons were killed ?
My young son, the Khalsa, still remains alive
and kicking.¹
What is the use of putting out a few sparks ?
Thou art merely exciting a raging fire the
more.’²

(14)

At the beginning, and then at the end, the Guru
says that he relies on God for help, guidance, and
protection; and that no enemy, howsoever superior
in manpower and resources, can harm him. He
says :

‘The insolent crow cannot touch him, who
hath fallen under the shadow of the *huma*.

1. The Guru here distinctly threatens the Emperor that his Khalsa will avenge all the wrongs done to him and his people.

2. The Guru here means to say that the movement started by him has come to stay; it is bound to spread and prosper, and to prove more powerful and effective in its objective than the few individuals whom the Emperor has killed could have been.

He who taketh the protection of a powerful tiger cannot be approached by a goat, a buffalo, or a deer.

What can an enemy do when God, the Friend, is kind ?

He giveth deliverance and pointeth out the way to His creatures.

He rescueth the helpless and protecteth them from injury.

How can an enemy lead him astray with whom the Guide of the way is well pleased?

Should tens of thousands proceed against such a person,

The Creator will be his protector and guardian.

When thou lookest to thy army and wealth, I am proud of the Kingdom of the Immortal God.

When God is a Friend, what can an enemy do, though he multiply himself a hundred times ?

If an enemy practise enmity a thousand times, he cannot, as long as God is a Friend, injure even a hair of one's head.'

CHAPTER XVI

The Zafarnama and Aurangzeb

Having prepared his Epistle of Victory, the Guru entrusted it to Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh, the two out of his Beloved Five who had survived the battle of Chamkaur and had accompanied him to Dina. They were deputed to deliver it to Aurangzeb in the Deccan. It was not safe for Sikhs to travel in those days, especially when the journey was long. Hence they disguised themselves as Muhammadan pilgrims, and proceeded on their journey to the south of India. At long last, after many adventures, they reached Ahmadnagar, where the Emperor was encamped and was lying on sick-bed. On reaching there, they called together the Sikhs who lived in and near the place, and acquainted them with all that had happened to the Guru, his family, and his Sikhs. They also told them their

mission and read out a letter specially addressed to them by the Guru.

We have already seen in what condition Aurangzeb was when he wrote his second and third letters to the Guru. It was in the midst of the reverses and calamities, already described, 'that, in October, 1705, Aurangzeb was attacked by a severe illness. He was consequently persuaded by his ministers to retire to Ahmadnagar. Pursued by skirmishing bodies of exultant Marathas, "slowly and with difficulty", the emperor reached Ahmadnagar on the 20th January, 1706, "where he had encamped twenty years earlier, filled with hopes of conquest and glory". Here he lingered on for a year, an old man of ninety, with little strength of body and mind, and, at length, on the morning of Friday, 20th February, 1707, his weary spirit found peace.'¹

It was at Ahmadnagar, where he lay ill, waiting for death, the Deliverer, that the Guru's letter was delivered to Aurangzeb. What was the state of his mind and heart at that time? That state was to determine the effect which the *Zafarnama* was to have on him. In the first place, he had 'realized towards the end of his career that his long reign of fifty years had been a colossal failure.'² This realization could not but have plunged him in grief and dejection. Memories of what he had done to his father, brothers, their families, to Sufis and Shias,

1. Edwardes and Garret, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

2. *Ibid*, p. 155.

to Hindus and Sikhs, must all have crowded into his fevered brain and added to its torments. He must have remembered what he had sown, and shuddered at the thought of what he was to reap, now that the reaping time was so near. Latif says, 'Before his death, he seems to have felt strongly that his dissolution was near, and the letters he dictated to his sons in the last days are sufficiently indicative of the intense remorse he felt for the past.'¹

In his letter to Prince Azam he wrote :—

'The instant which passed in power, hath left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire. My valuable time has passed in vain.....I brought nothing into this world and carry nothing out except the infirmities of man. I fear for my salvation and dread the torments with which I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounties of God, yet, regarding my actions, fear will not quit me.'²

To Prince Kam Bakhsh, he wrote, 'I carry with me the fruits of my sins and imperfections...I have committed numerous crimes and know not with what punishment I may be seized.'³

The Guru's letter reached Aurangzeb at a time when he was feeling that his end was near, he was

1. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

2. Edwardes & Garret, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

full of intense remorse for his sins and crimes, and dreaded the punishment that he might be seized with on account of them. The Guru's letter must have added to all this. It must have conjured up before his fevered, agitated mind vivid pictures of his sins and crimes against the Guru, committed in violation of his oaths on the Quran. It told him what to expect from God and the Prophet.

The Guru's letter, backed by further details given by the bearers thereof, had a strong effect on the dying Emperor. It softened his heart. It filled him with repentance. It deepened his remorse for the past and his anxiety about the future.

The Emperor treated Bhais Daya Singh and Dharam Singh with kindness and courtesy. He asked them to appeal to the Guru on his behalf and prevail upon him to come, visit him, and speak to him the 'kind words' which he had promised to do in his letter. Having learnt from them how difficult and risky it had been for them to travel all the way from the Panjab, he furnished them with a *parwana* of safe conduct for their return journey.

It is believed that he wrote to the Governor of Sarhind telling him that the Guru should not be molested any more. From *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* we learn that he issued orders that the Guru should be provided safe conduct throughout the empire on his way to Ahmadnagar, and, if he so desired, given cash to defray his travelling expenses.

Bhais Daya Singh and Dharam Singh returned to

the Guru in due course. Because of the *parwana* of safe conduct which had been furnished to them, their return journey had been quite safe and much quicker. They informed the Guru of all that they had seen and heard. They conveyed to him Aurangzeb's last request. The Guru was deeply moved when he heard of the Emperor's condition. He decided to accept the Emperor's invitation, to go to him, to utter kind words to him, and to prepare him for the last journey to meet his Maker.

So he started towards the Deccan. When he reached the neighbourhood of Baghaur, he heard the news that Aurangzeb had died in his camp at Ahmadnagar on February 20, 1707. On hearing the news, the Guru retraced his steps to the north.

CHAPTER XVII

War of Succession

Aurangzeb had three sons—Muazzim, who ^{later} became Bahadur Shah, Azam, and Kam Bakhsh. When he died, his eldest son, Muazzim was engaged in a military expedition in Afghanistan. Azam was, at the time, with his father in the Deccan. He at once usurped the throne, took possession of the treasury, and assumed command of the imperial army. Muazzim, being the eldest, was the rightful claimant to the throne. On getting the news of his father's death and his younger brother's action, he hastened to fight for his father's throne.

His opposing brother was better placed and better equipped. Hence he had to look out for allies in all directions and to ask for their assistance. We have already seen how Muazzim (Bahadur Shah) had come to know and admire Guru

Gobind Singh. He knew of the Guru's martial strength and military achievements, of the reverses which he had inflicted on the hill chiefs as well as on the imperial forces. It was true that the Guru's power and military set-up had been broken for the time. It was true that most of his soldiers had dispersed. Still Bahadur Shah knew that a word from the Guru could bring into the field hundreds of strong, tried soldiers, who would never betray him, desert him, or flee from the field.

Accordingly, he decided to invite the Master of the Khalsa to his aid. He sent his secretary, Bhai Nand Lal, to the Guru with a request for help in obtaining his father's throne. The Guru, on his part, found nothing wrong or objectionable in helping Bahadur Shah, who was a better man and would prove to be a better ruler than his usurping brother. Hence he sent a detachment of his trusty soldiers under the command of Bhai Dharam Singh, with instructions to help Bahadur Shah in the war of succession.¹ In view of the grave political

1. Macauliffe, V., p. 230; Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 76; Ganda Singh's article in October, 1940 issue of the *Panj Darya*.

By the way, this act of the Guru shows the wonderful magnanimity of his heart. Just think of what he, his predecessors, and his Sikhs had suffered at the hands of Bahadur Shah's ancestors. The latter's great-grandfather, Jahangir, had ordered Guru Arjan Dev's execution 'with tortures'. The same Emperor had imprisoned the Guru's grandfather, Guru Hargobind. Shah Jahan had four times sent his army against Guru Hargobind and desecrated and demolished Sikh sacred places. Aurangzeb had ordered the execution of the Guru's father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru's four sons and his aged mother had been martyred. He himself had been pursued and hunted relentlessly. Yet, when a son of that Aurangzeb and descendant of Jahangir and Shah Jahan sought his help to enforce his right to the throne, he readily agreed to help him. He sent his dear Sikhs to fight and risk their lives for the Prince.

circumstances in the country, the Guru retraced his steps to the north. He had a mind to meet and confer with Bahadur Shah.

Having fully equipped his army, Bahadur Shah marched to Agra. His brother came up from the South to meet him. On June 8, 1707, a battle was fought at Jajau, near Agra. Azam, as well as his principal officers, was slain. Upon this his army fled from the field and victory remained with Bahadur Shah.

The war of succession thus ended in favour of Bahadur Shah. He became undisputed monarch of India, and returned to Agra. From there he dispatched Bhai Dharam Singh to inform the Guru of the victory. He also expressed a wish to see the Guru.

As we have already said, on hearing the news of Aurangzeb's death and of the impending war of succession, the Guru had started back towards Delhi. It was at Delhi that he was informed of Bahadur Shah's victory, and received his invitation. The Emperor later sent a special messenger to the Guru to expedite his departure for Agra. The messenger added that the Emperor would have been happy to visit the Guru, but he feared the bigotry of his coreligionists. As he was not yet firmly settled on the throne, he did not like to excite that bigotry.¹

1. Macauliffe, V., p. 231.

The Guru accepted the invitation and started towards Agra. After passing through Mathura and Bindraban, he reached Agra, where he met the Emperor on July 23, 1707. He was received with the honour due to a valued ally and holy man. The Emperor thanked him for the assistance which he had given him in obtaining the throne. He also made him costly presents—a rich dress of honour and a jewelled scarf (*dhukhdhukhi*) worth sixty thousand rupees.¹ That this robe was given to an ally and revered holy man of religion, and not to an employee or a prospective employee, is shown by the fact that the Guru did not put it on then and there, as all honoured servants had to do, but had it carried away to his camp by a Sikh. Muslim writers, ever eager to detract from the name and fame of the Guru, quietly ignore this important fact, and say that the dress was ‘bestowed’ by the Emperor and accepted by the Guru as a mark of the Guru’s having entered the Emperor’s service. We shall have to say a good deal about this allegation in another chapter.

1. See *Bahadur Shah Nama*, entry dated 4th Jamadi-ul-Awwal, 1119 A.H. (July 23, 1707); and Guru Gobind Singh’s *Hukmnama* (letter) to the Sikh Sangat of Dhaul, dated 1st Katik, 1764 Bk. (October 12, 1707); and *Gur Sobha*, xvi, 35.

CHAPTER XVIII

Negotiations

The Emperor was deeply impressed by the Guru's personality. He requested him to spend some time with him and give him the benefit of his holy company. The Guru gladly accepted the invitation. He remained in or near Agra till the beginning of November, 1707. During this period he used to meet the Emperor now and then. Bahadur Shah was of a milder disposition and far more tolerant in religious matters than his father, Aurangzeb. He greatly enjoyed the Guru's company and very often had religious discussions with him. In that way he came to learn a good deal about Sikhism in addition to what he had learnt from his secretary, Bhai Nand Lal. This familiarity led to greater understanding and appreciation.

On the other hand, the Guru was pleased with these meetings and interviews; for he saw in them the possibility of ending the age-old differences with the Mughals. He was hopeful that through persuasion and by using his personal influence with the Emperor, he might be able to usher in an era of peace and better understanding between the Mughals and their non-Muslim subjects. He also acquainted the Emperor with particulars of the excesses committed against him, his family, his Sikhs, and the Hindus of the Panjab. He pointed out that, as far as he and his people were concerned, the chief sinner was Wazir Khan, viceroy of Sarhind. His cruel deeds had perturbed even the bigoted, hard-hearted Aurangzeb. Bahadur Shah was greatly moved and promised that when he had got firmly established on the throne, he would punish the murderer of the innocent children. In the meantime, he offered the Guru a jagir and a large estate.¹ The Guru, however, declined the offer. He had never cherished even the faintest desire to found a kingdom or principality. He had no ambitions that way. Even after decisive victories against the hill chiefs, he had never occupied even an inch of their territory. The acceptance of a jagir now would have meant the abandonment of his cherished ideal of bringing about an era of liberty and equality, a spirit of all-brotherliness in the land, the ideal for which he had worked so hard and sacrificed so much so far. From the creator of a nation and the

1. Daulat Rai, *Biography of Guru Gobind Singh* (Urdu).

liberator of a people he would have been reduced to the position of a petty chieftain. So while he declined the offer, he impressed upon the Emperor the need of reversing the religious policy of Aurangzeb, and restraining his viceroys and qazis from bigoted persecution of the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Emperor's response to this appeal was encouraging, and the Guru was hopeful of success.

That such was the trend of the talks between the two can be inferred from certain words occurring in the letter (*hukm-nama*), dated October 2, 1707, addressed by the Guru to the Sangat of Dhaul. In it he refers to '*some other things which were proceeding satisfactorily.*' These other things could only be the friendly negotiations then going on between himself and the Emperor. In that letter the Guru also expressed the hope that, after the termination of these negotiations, he would be returning to Anandpur.

While the negotiations were yet in progress, the Emperor had, on November 1, 1707, to march into Rajputana against the Kachhavas. From there he had to march further south to suppress the insurrection of his brother Kam Bakhsh. He invited the Guru to accompany him. The Guru accepted the invitation. He had his own purpose in going with the Emperor. In the first place, he wanted to continue the negotiations and try to bring them to a successful conclusion. Secondly, he wanted to deliver to the people of the South his great message, and to rouse them to a sense of their duty towards

their faith, community, and country. He had hopes of rousing the Rajputs and the Marathas to do and dare for the holy task of uprooting the foreign tyrants' rule and liberating their country.

The Emperor and the Guru travelled together through Rajputana. Several Rajput rajas came to pay homage to the Guru. He exhorted them to give up their debasing practices and submissive outlook. Passing through such cities as Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chittaur, Burhanpur, and Poona, they reached near Nander, on the margin of the Godavari.

We have noticed what purpose the Guru had in view when agreeing to accompany the Emperor on his expedition to the South. But what was the Emperor's motive in asking for the Guru's company? One object may have been that he did not want to terminate the negotiations abruptly at that stage. If he accepted the Guru's request for punishing those who had committed outrage on his sons, he might be inviting trouble for himself; for he was not yet so securely established in power as to be able, successfully and safely, to carry out such punitive measures against his viceroys and others. On the other hand, if he turned down the Guru's request, he would be offending the Guru and driving him into open hostility. That, too, he did not like to do. Another object which the Emperor had in mind was probably this. He knew the Guru's ability as a general and leader. The Guru had with him a few hundred tried, trusty soldiers of his own. The Emperor had designs to use the Guru in curbing

the Marathas. When, however, he asked the Guru to lead the army of attack, the latter refused point blank.¹ He had helped Bahadur Shah against his usurping brother in the capacity of an ally and for the reason that he (Bahadur Shah) was liberal-minded and promised to be a better ruler than the usurper. There was nothing wrong or unpatriotic in that act. Rather, it was for the good of all. But to help the Mughal Emperor in subjugating a race of sturdy warriors, who had stood so well against Aurangzeb, would have been not only an act of treachery against his own people and country, but also an indefensible repudiation of all his lofty ideals, ideals for which he had done and suffered so much. So, he did what he could never have done if he had been a servant of the Emperor. He refused to comply with his request.

During his travels with Bahadur Shah, the Guru, true to his object, occasionally separated from the royal camp to preach his mission to the people. This fact is borne out by *Tarikh-i-Bahadur Shahi*. It is recorded there, 'At the time the army (of Bahadur Shah) was marching southwards towards Burhanpur, Guru Gobind (Singh), one of the descendants of (Guru) Nanak, had come into these districts to *travel*, and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and all sorts of people.'²

1. Daulat Rai, *op. cit.*

2. Elliot and Dowson, vii, 566.

All this time the Emperor went on making evasive replies to the Guru's suggestions about punishing the wrong doers. At last the Guru was convinced that there was no prospect of the Emperor's agreeing to any proposal for the redress of his wrongs. Hence, when Bahadur Shah tried to use him against the Marathas, he refused to oblige him and parted company. He went to Nander, on the bank of the Godavari, in September 1708. But it should be borne in mind that the parting was not an open breach.

CHAPTER XIX

An Allegation Refuted

It has been noted already that after his victory in the war of succession, Bahadur Shah invited the Guru to Agra and there gave him a dress of honour as a token of his gratitude for the help which the Guru had given him in that war. Some writers have represented this fact as the 'bestowal' of a dress of honour as a mark of the Guru's having entered the Emperor's service. They further say that the Guru accompanied Bahadur Shah to the Deccan in the capacity of a servant, holding a small command in the imperial army.

It has been shown above that the dress was given to the Guru as a present to an ally and holy man of religion, and not as a 'bestowal' on an employee or prospective employee. Now we shall

examine the allegation that the Guru entered Bahadur Shah's service and accompanied him to the Deccan in the capacity of a servant.

Before examining the allegation critically, we shall trace it back to its origin and assess what credence it deserves on the score of that origin.

Let us take the two chief protagonists of the service theory, namely, Cunningham and Latif. Cunningham, who wrote his book, *History of the Sikhs*, in 1848, says, 'The Sikh writers seem unanimous in giving to their great teacher a military command in the Deccan....The contemporary historian, Khafi Khan, states that he received rank in the Mughal army (see Elphinstone, *History of India*, ii 566 note).' It may be noted that Cunningham does not claim any direct knowledge of Khafi Khan's work. He has relied on Elphinstone's note for his assertion regarding Khafi Khan's stating that the Guru had accepted service.

Hence Cunningham's authorities for the allegation are (i) Sikh writers, and (ii) Khafi Khan.

Latif writes, 'The fact of his (Guru Gobind Singh's) having taken employment under the Mughal Government is fully confirmed by various writers, vide Sir J. Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Forster's *Travels*, page 263. The latter writer also states that Guru Gobind Singh had a small command in the Mughal service, which is confirmed by Khafi Khan.'

So Latif's authorities for the allegation are (i) Sir J. Malcolm, (ii) Khafi Khan and (iii) Forster.

Now let us examine whether these 'authorities' actually support the allegation, and if they do, on what basis they do so.

Sikh Writers : Cunningham's assertion that 'Sikh writers seem unanimous in giving to their great teacher a military command in the Deccan', is absolutely wrong and baseless. He has not given the name of even one such Sikh writer. As a matter of fact, no Sikh writer has ever made such a statement. Indeed, that is the chief complaint of Latif's against Sikh writers. He says, 'The Sikh authors are always cautious in concealing the weak points of their religious leaders and in giving prominence to anything which redounds to their glory. Thus while they freely acknowledge that (Guru) Gobind (Singh) rendered material aid to Bahadur Shah in the war which that emperor waged against his rebel brother Kam Bakhsh, and even own that the Guru took the field of action. But *they carefully conceal the fact of the Guru's accepting employment under the emperor.*' (Italics ours)

Again, Dr. Trump who, in the words of Macauliffe, 'never failed to avail himself of an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs', writing in 1877, said that the Sikhs were 'loath to concede this appointment of (Guru) Gobind Singh.'

Thus, on the testimony of these, by no means friendly writers, it is established that no Sikh writer has ever said that Guru Gobind Singh entered Bahadur Shah's service. Moreover, Macauliffe, who based his narrative on a discriminate study of Sikh writers, says that the Guru assisted Bahadur Shah on the mediation of Bhai Nand Lal, and accompanied him to the Deccan of his own free will, having been invited to do so.¹

Thus we see that there is no truth whatsoever in Cunningham's statement that 'the Sikh writers seem unanimous in giving to their great teacher a military command in the Deccan'. The fact is that no Sikh writer has ever made such a statement. In all probability, in making that statement about 'the Sikh writers', Cunningham has relied entirely on Forster, who makes a similar allegation on the authority of 'the Sicques' (Sikhs), of whom he, too, does not mention even one.

Non-Sikh Writers : Among the non-Sikh writers, Cunningham's authority is Khafi Khan; and Latif's authorities are Sir J. Malcolm, Khafi Khan, and Forster. Let us see what these three writers say on this point and on what basis.

Sir J. Malcolm : Of the three writers cited by Latif as his authorities for the allegation, Sir John Malcolm is definitely of the opposite opinion. Far from saying that the Guru took service under Bahadur Shah, he cannot even 'think' that the Guru

1. *Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p. 232.

could have 'sunk into a servant of that Government against whom he had been in constant rebellion'. Here is his view : 'When we consider the enthusiastic ardour of his mind, his active habits, his valour, and the insatiable thirst for revenge which he had cherished through life against the murderers of his father and the oppressors of his sect, we cannot think, when that leading passion of his mind must have been increased by the massacre of his children and the death and mutilation of his most attached followers, that he would have remained inactive, much less that he would have sunk into a servant of that Government against which he had been in constant rebellion. Nor is it likely that such a leader as Guru Gobind (Singh) could ever have been trusted by a Muhammadan prince.'

Khafi Khan : As for Khafi Khan, the contemporary historian, we must remember that he cannot at all be relied upon as a trustworthy historian for two reasons : First, he did not have the independence which a historian must possess if he is to write true history. He was writing under the eyes of his monarchs and could not examine their actions critically, or even describe them faithfully. He was bound to write only what would please those monarchs or would redound to their glory, and to avoid everything likely to have the opposite result. Secondly, his very mental outfit unfits him as a historian in matters relating to the 'infidels', against whom he vents his scorn and hatred on every page.

To him the Emperor was 'the Keeper of the Faith'. Any opposition offered to him was offered to Islam, to God, and to 'His Deputy on earth'. He lacks even the ordinary human courtesy and decency which make a man refer to his opponents in inoffensive language. We find him referring to Guru Gobind Singh by extremely undignified and unbecoming appellations. Surely, he was incapable of doing justice to the Guru. If the Guru had actually 'sunk into a servant of the Mughal Government', Khafi Khan would have certainly mentioned the fact with exultation. But he makes no mention of the Guru's having entered Bahadur Shah's service. All that he writes can be translated as under :

'During the days when Bahadur Shah directed his attention towards Haidrabad, or when he started towards that place, one of the leaders of that infamous community, Govind by name, came into the presence of the emperor, accompanied by two or three hundred *sowars* (horsemen) carrying spears and some infantry, and proceeded in the company of the emperor.'¹

Thus Khafi Khan says only this much that

1. Khafi Khan's *Muntakhab Al Lubab* has suffered many mutilations in the course of time. The most authentic text of this work is the one published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1874. This text is also taken to be authentic by Sir Charles Elliot, the writer of the '*History of India as Told by its Own Historians*'. According to this text Khafi Khan's actual words, a translation of which has been given above, are :—

'*Dar ayyamekih Bahadur Shah badshah mutwajjuh Haidrabad gardidand, Gobind nam az sargrohan-i-an quam-i-bad-nam bahazur rasidah, ba do sad sih sad sawar nezaq-bardar-o-piyadah dar rakab rafaqat namud.*'

The word '*rafaqat*' means 'company', not 'service'

the Guru accompanied the emperor at the head of some infantry and cavalry. He does not say that the Guru did so as a *servant* of the emperor, but that he did so only as a *companion*.

Thus we find that out of the three authorities mentioned by Latif, two are against him. It is strange how he took them as corroborating him. Most probably, he read neither of these authorities of his. On the other hand, he based his statement on a foot-note of Elphinstone's, which he totally misunderstood or misconstrued. As a matter of fact, Elphinstone, in his foot-note, refers to Sir John Malcolm and 'Forster's *Travels* page 263' in support of his statement that the Guru was 'murdered by a private enemy at Nander, in the Dekhan'. Then he adds the words about 'the Mughal service'. Latif has copied the whole foot-note and taken it to support his allegation, which it does not.

Forster : Now we are left with only Forster. This man, according to his own admission, had no 'substantial authority' from which he could deduce the history of the Sikhs. Writing in 1783, he said, 'The Sicques (Sikhs) say' that Guru Gobind Singh 'received marks of favour from Bahadur Shah, who being apprised of his military abilities, gave him a charge in the army which marched into the Deccan to oppose the rebellion of Rambucksh (*sic*).' He has not mentioned even one Sikh who said what he has put into the mouths of the Sikhs, in indicating what Cunningham understood him to indicate, that all Sikhs were unanimously of this view. We have

seen that no Sikh writer has ever made such an allegation against the Guru. Forster, writing without any substantial authority, is the first writer to give currency to the allegation and, curiously enough, he has put it into the mouths of the Sikhs. He has cited or stated no authority for this astounding allegation, because he had none. Moreover, in his account of the Sikhs he has made a large number of astounding errors which go to prove that he cannot be depended upon as a reliable or true historian.

It will be seen from all this that there is no historical evidence to support the allegation that Guru Gobind Singh 'sank into a servant' of Bahadur Shah. On the contrary, we have positive, official, contemporary evidence to show that the Guru did not accompany the Emperor as a military commander of his. It is recorded in *Tarikh-i-Bahadurshahi*, 'Guru Gobind, one of the descendants of Nanak, had come into these districts to *travel* and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and all sorts of people.' It will be seen that the Guru had gone thither 'to *travel*' and at his own pleasure and will, in Bahadur Shah's company. His constantly addressing assemblies of all sorts of people would show that he was not a government servant; for such liberty could not have been allowed to a government servant, and much less to a military commander proceeding on an important expedition.

Having thus disposed of the alleged authorities for the statement that the Guru accepted service under Bahadur Shah, let us critically examine the statement and see how far it can be credible in itself.

The writers who have alleged that the Guru became a servant of the Mughal government, have nowhere explained what considerations or necessity forced or induced the Guru to enter the service of 'the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race'. Surely, he was not a military adventurer, nor was he forced by circumstances to be a mercenary soldier. He still had in the Panjab a number of well-placed, devoted Sikhs, like Dall Singh, Ram Singh, Tilok Singh, Shamira, and a host of others. They had, again and again, importuned him to stay with them as their Lord and Master. He could have lived with them and passed the rest of his life in the Panjab in peace and safety ; for, after the accession of Bahadur Shah, active punitive measures against the Sikhs had been suspended. He was known throughout India. If he had found it unsafe to stay in the Panjab, he could have chosen his residence anywhere else, according to his pleasure. We know that after parting company with the Emperor, he settled at Nander. He had no lack of funds or where-withals for living a life in the manner that he had been accustomed to all along. What relish, then, could he find in holding a 'small command' in the Mughal army ? Though Bahadur Shah was milder

and more tolerant than his father, yet he had not, definitely and clearly, reversed his father's imperial religious policy; he had not begun to bring back the days of Akbar. Therefore, with the memory of the great wrongs done to him by the Mughals being yet fresh, the Guru could not have reconciled himself to joining the army of the oppressors, and helping them to maintain and extend their oppressive rule. Nor, as Narang says, 'can the service theory be reconciled with the Guru's commission of Banda Bahadur to the leadership of the Khalsa and his doings there'. Moreover, the Guru's deeds, ideals, and plans were so well known, his ability as a general, leader, and teacher of men, had been so amply demonstrated, that no Muhammadan prince could have trusted him with a position in his army.

CHAPTER XX

Assassination by Mughals' Hirelings

As we have seen, Wazir Khan, viceroy of Sarhind, had been responsible for most of the Guru's sufferings. Though what he did was done under Aurangzeb's orders, yet he had greatly exceeded those orders. He had done things which even Aurangzeb, with all his cruelty of nature, could not approve, and for which he had felt sincerely repentant.

After Aurangzeb's death Guru Gobind Singh rendered valuable assistance to Bahadur Shah in the war of succession. Bahadur Shah felt greatly obliged. 'As a token of his gratitude, he invited the Guru to his court at Agra, treated him with utmost respect, and gave him costly presents. He also suspended active punitive measures against the

Sikhs. After the successful conclusion of the war of succession, the two were together at Agra for over three months. Then they marched to the Deccan together.

Naturally, Wazir Khan was much alarmed at the daily increasing closer relations between the Guru and the Emperor. He knew what would happen to him, if peace came to be made between the Mughals and the Sikhs. It was also believed that one of the Guru's objects in accompanying Bahadur Shah was to get the murderer of his sons duly punished.¹ It was rumoured that the Emperor had almost agreed, but had asked for time. The Emperor had already shown an inclination to help the Guru at the expense of the viceroy. He had granted a firman in favour of the Guru upon Wazir Khan for the payment of three hundred rupees a day. Wazir Khan, therefore, had good reasons to fear that the Guru might succeed in getting him punished. Therefore, he could not rest or feel safe as long as the Guru was alive. So he decided to get the Guru assassinated.²

His first attempt did not succeed.² He then hired two Pathan assassins for the fell purpose. They first went to Delhi and met the Guru's wife. From her they ascertained the Guru's whereabouts and then started for Nander or Abchnagar. They began to pay occasional visits to the Guru. No suspicions arose in any one's mind regarding them.

1. Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

They came to be known as new devotees of the Guru, who treated them with kindness and allowed them to sit close to him whenever they chose to do so. All the time, they were studying the situation, and making up their mind about the hour that was most likely to suit their nefarious design. They concluded that the evening time was the best. So one day, after the evening service, they stayed on after all others had left. The Guru or anyone else did not feel any suspicion regarding their action; for it was customary for many to stay on and enjoy the Guru's company even at that late hour. He seated the Pathans near his bed and gave them *parshad* (some sweets). They devoured it at once.

Most of the Sikhs had left. There was only one attendant near him. That attendant fell asleep. The Guru himself was sitting on his bed. A few minutes after the Pathans' arrival, the Guru, too, lay down to rest. This was the Pathans' opportunity. One of the Pathans sprang to his feet like a tiger, drew his sword, and stabbed the Guru on the left side. Before he could deal another blow, he was despatched by the Guru with a stroke of his sword. His companion tried to save himself by running away. But he fell under the swords of the Sikhs who had come up on hearing the noise. The Guru's wound was immediately sewn, and in a few days it appeared to have healed up. But when, a few days later, he tried to bend a stiff bow presented by a Sikh, the imperfectly healed wound burst open. As a consequence, profuse bleeding occurred. The Guru

remained cheerful up to the last. Nobody had felt that his end was so near. Suddenly, on October 7, 1708, about an hour and a half after midnight, he roused his Sikhs from sleep, bade them farewell, and returned to his Eternal Home.

It will not be out of place to mention here that according to some writers the hired assassins were sent by Wazir Khan in collusion with Bahadur Shah. There seems to be some substance in this contention. Bahadur Shah knew that the Guru had parted company with him in no friendly mood. He was fully aware that he had belied the hopes which the Guru had, with good reason, built on him. Knowing the manifold qualities and the potential capacity of the Guru, the Emperor could not feel secure as long as the Guru was alive. Hence he colluded with Wazir Khan to get rid of their common danger. All the same, the truth remains that the responsibility for the dastardly deed lies squarely on Wazir Khan's shoulders.

Thus the Mughals wiped out the Guru's entire family—father, mother, four sons, and himself. They killed thousands of his dear, brave Sikhs. But still they lost the game and the Guru won it. In the words of Narang, 'Though he did not live to see his high aims accomplished, Guru Gobind Singh's labours were not lost. Though he did not actually break the shackles that bound his nation, he had set their souls free, and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and national ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity

attached to the Lord of Delhi, and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Moslem tyranny. He had taken up sparrows and had taught them to hunt down imperial falcons.'

In the words of Daulat Rai, 'Using his blood and bones as manure, Guru Gobind Singh planted the tree of Indian nationalism which flourished and fructified in due course. Though his ideal was not accomplished in his life-time, yet his labours were not wasted. ..And before his death Guru Gobind Singh was fully satisfied that he had done his work well, and had fully carried out the mission with which he had been entrusted by the Lord.'

It is true that he did not actually uproot the Mughal empire or power, but he shook it violently to its very foundations and paved the way for its decline and fall.

Epilogue

We have traced here the story of the relations between the Houses of Babar and Baba Nanak, and shown how these relations underwent a total reversal. The change in these relations came about not because the successors of Guru Nanak, in any way, departed from the doctrines preached and practised by him; but because the successors of Emperor Babar adopted a state policy which altogether violated the assurances given by him to Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh had to take a vow to uproot the empire, not because his aims and ambitions were opposed to those of Guru Nanak, but because the policy and acts of Aurangzeb were totally against the assurances given by Babar to Guru Nanak. Moreover, the reversal of the relations was not a sudden development resulting from the idiosyncrasies of Aurangzeb even, but a gradual growth generated and promoted by

mutual actions and reactions, a natural, inevitable outcome of the historical process that had been going on ever since the historic meeting between the founder of Sikhism and the founder of the Mughal empire. 'There was no break, no digression in the programme of Sikh life' as initiated by Guru Nanak and carried on by his nine successors. Guru Gobind Singh completed the edifice begun by Guru Nanak, whereas Aurangzeb brought to the verge of fall and ruin the empire founded by Babar.

Thus we see that the reversal of relations between the Houses of Babar and Baba Nanak was a consequence of the change in political and social conditions brought about by the religious policy of the later Mughals. If the policy had not become one of militant, bigoted persecution, but had remained one of tolerance and peaceful co-existence, the history of not only the relations between the Sikhs and the Mughals, but that of the whole sub-continent would have been very different indeed. If the movement started by Guru Nanak had been allowed to proceed undisturbed and unchecked, his successors would have succeeded in spreading it not only all over India, but even abroad. The religion founded by Guru Nanak would have organized itself as a world-force, and evolved a living, energetic, world-wide society for the uplift of mankind. His successors would have spread his message in all the distant lands visited by him and even in others, and converted their people to the Sikh faith.

That this is not an idle speculation or wishful

thinking, is borne out by undeniable facts of history. We know it on the authority of *Tuzik-i-Jahangiri*, or in the words of Jahangir himself, that Guru Arjan attained very great success in gaining converts in large numbers from all sections including the Muhammadans. This fact perturbed Jahangir so much that he decided to either put an end to this 'false traffic', or to bring the Guru into the fold of Islam. Similarly, Guru Hargobind succeeded in his religious *parchar* so well that, as we learn from the *Dabastan-i-Mazahib*, 'not a Muslim was left between the hills near Kiratpur (the Guru's residence) and the frontiers of Tibet and Khotan'. We can safely say, therefore, that if all the Gurus had been free to devote all their time and attention to the propagation of Guru Nanak's religion, it would have spread far and wide, even beyond the frontiers of India.

Namakhshahi

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